

JOHN 3:22-36
ABSOLUTE SURRENDER!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

In our last study we looked at probably the most known passage in all of the Scriptures, John 3:16 and what that was all about. In fact, we covered verses 1-21 of John chapter 3. And you know the climax of that section, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

And this was all born out of a Pharisee named Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night and he recognized that there was something special about Jesus.

And Jesus lays it all out for this religious leader, that it doesn't matter how good you are, how religious you are – ***YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN!***

For Nicodemus, he did not get it. And Jesus goes on to explain that it is more than just a natural birth, you must be born again, a spiritual birth! And this spiritual birth comes from above, it is from God, but we must receive that gift by faith.

And Jesus gives to Nicodemus a picture of the work that He was about to do. The picture was of Israel in the wilderness, complaining and God sent fiery serpents upon them as a judgment against them for their unbelief. And if they were bit, they would die.

As they cried out to the Lord and Moses interceded, God said to Moses to put a bronze serpent on a pole and whoever is bit needs to look upon that bronze serpent on the pole and they would be healed!

And as foolish as that sounded, all who did were healed. All that refused, tried to be healed their own way, died!

And the same is true today. Many people laugh at looking to the Messiah dying on a tree for our sins and thus, they refuse to look, and they will die in their sins. It is a choice that they have made.

For all who do look, for those who repent of their sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives, they will be healed of their sins, and they will enter into eternity with Jesus because they are born again!

As we will see this morning in our study of John, continuing in John chapter 3, we see John the Baptist and his disciples have an encounter with some of the Jews about the ministry of Jesus growing! And as you read this it almost seems out of place from what John was just talking about. He was talking about Nicodemus and being born again and now this, what is the point?

I think the point is simple. You see, once you come to that saving faith, you are born again, then it is a life of complete surrender to the Lord. It is not my will but His will that needs to be done in our lives!

Now, in saying that, let me ask you this question. How many of you, the moment you got saved, and now, some two years, five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years or more down the road, have continued a life of complete surrender to the Lord?

I think this is an area that all of us struggle in!

Why is that?

Because we like to be in control of our lives. We like to know what is going to happen and we think we know what is best and that kind of mentality usually gets us into trouble. God has what is best for our lives.

I am not saying that He has what is the easiest path for our lives, but what is best as He is molding and shaping our lives to be the men and women He wants us to be.

And let's face it, surrender is hard, and I think as you look at what the definition of surrender is all about, you can see why.

Noah Webster defined "surrender" like this:

To yield; to give up one's self into the power of another.

- Noah Webster 1823, American Dictionary of the English Language

It is hard to let go and let someone else direct your life! Let me show you what I mean about this battle of surrendering to another and the refusal to do that is just plain pride!

Many of you know that Roger Staubach was the quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys. He was a great quarterback who led the Cowboys to a world championship in 1971.

The struggle for Staubach was that he was a quarterback who didn't call his own signals, his own plays and this was a source of trial for him.

Every play that was sent in came from Coach Landry. Roger was told when to pass, when to run, and only in an emergency situation was he ever allowed to change the play.

And, if he did change the play, he better have called the right one!

Don't get me wrong, Staubach felt that his coach, Tom Landry, had a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy.

The problem was pride, for it kept telling him that he should be able to run his own team, he was the quarterback!

Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory."

Did you get that?

For Roger Staubach, he understood that obedience, or I should say the lack of obedience to his coach, was just a pride issue.

Once he was able to let go of his pride and surrender to the plans of his coach, “Once [he] learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.”

And that is the key for us. When we refuse to surrender to the Lord, when we want to do what we want to do, that is pride, and we are telling the Lord that we know better than He does. We know what is best for our life. Again, that is just – ***PRIDE!***

And in our study this morning we will be looking at the topic – ***ABSOLUTE SURRENDER!***

And I think this is an important one for us to hear and apply to our lives because it is what is best for our lives.

I have broken the verses we will be looking at this morning down into four main points and they are,

THE SET-UP – JOHN 3:22-24

THE CONFRONTATION – JOHN 3:25-26

ABSOLUTE SURRENDER – JOHN 3:27-30

THE CORRECT PERSPECTIVE – JOHN 3:31-36

Before we get to our study this morning, let me share these words with you from Andrew Murray.

What he is going to share is what is born out of I Kings 20:1-4, where we are told, **“Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it. Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, ‘Thus says Ben-Hadad: “Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.”’ And the king of Israel answered and said, ‘My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.’”**

It is out of that that Andrew Murray wrote,

What Ben Hadad asked was absolute surrender; and what Ahab gave was what was asked of him - absolute surrender. I want to use these words: “My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am your[s], and all that I have,” as the words of absolute surrender with which every child of God ought to yield himself to his Father.

We have heard it before, but we need to hear it very definitely - the condition of God’s blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands. Praise God! If our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us, and to the blessing God will bestow.

Absolute surrender - let me tell you where I got those words. I used them myself often, and you have heard them numberless times. But in Scotland once I was in a company where we were talking about the condition of Christ’s Church, and what the great need of the Church and of believers is; and there was in our company a godly worker who has much to do in training workers, and I asked him what he would say was the great need of the Church, and the message that ought to be preached.

He answered very quietly and simply and determinedly: “Absolute surrender to God is the one thing.”

The words struck me as never before. And that man began to tell how, in the workers with whom he had to deal, he finds that if they are sound on that point, even though they be backward, they are willing to be taught and helped, and they always improve; whereas others who are not sound there very often go back and leave the work.

The condition for obtaining God’s full blessing is absolute surrender to Him.

- Andrew Murray, *Absolute Surrender*, p. 3

Why are there these blessings of God as we surrender to Him?

Because apart from that we are doing our own thing and there are consequences to that, and it is not good.

I am not saying that if you surrender completely to the Lord that you will never have problems, sickness, or anything else. But as you surrender to the Lord, He will bless you as you go through those times just as He did with Job!

But if you don’t, like I have said, there are consequences, and they can be very tragic.

In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia.

Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the accident.

It wasn’t a technology problem like radar malfunction – or even thick fog.

The cause was human stubbornness. Each captain was aware of the other ship's presence nearby. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the others. Each was too proud to yield first. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.

- Closer Walk, December 1991

How true that is in our own lives, that when we refuse to surrender, to submit to the Lord, by the time we come to our senses, we are in the midst of a very difficult situation, sometimes a tragic one, all because we refused to listen to His voice, we refused to believe that He knows what is best for us. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Like I have said, in our study this morning we are going to see that John the Baptist was willing to submit, to surrender his life to the Lord, and it was not all talk, but there was action on his part, he lived what he believed.

With that said, let's begin reading in John chapter 3, starting in verse 22 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we look at this topic – ***ABSOLUTE SURRENDER!***

JOHN 3**VERSES 22-24**

In these verses I see – ***THE SET-UP!***

And what I mean by that is this. What is transpiring here is setting us up for what will take place next. And the Lord does do that in our lives. He brings things into our lives to set us up for what He is going to do next, but, as we will see, it is going to be up to us as individuals to obey what the Lord is showing us or do our own thing, which is not good.

Here we see John focus on the work Jesus did in the area of Judea while the other Gospels focused on the work that Jesus did in the region of Galilee.

And here in Judea we see that Jesus is baptizing people, really His men are baptizing people.

Of this Morris wrote, ***“More probably it represents a continuation of the ‘baptism of repentance’ that was characteristic of John the Baptist.”***

And we also see that John the Baptist was baptizing.

Keep in mind that John the Baptist had a huge following. Remember what we read in Matthew 3:5-6, **“Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”**

But now we see that Jesus has come on the scene and both the disciples of Jesus and the disciples of John are baptizing people.

We know that Jesus was in the area of Judea, and we are told that John the Baptist and his men were in the area of Aenon near Salim.

We are not sure exactly where Aenon was located, but many feel that it was in the area of Shechem in Samaria, outside of Judea.

One of the reasons John the Baptist was there is given to us in John 3:23, “**... because there was much water there ...**”

And that again tells me that there were a lot of people coming to see John the Baptist and be baptized.

But there was a distance between the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus, and I think another reason John the Baptist is in this area is because he was giving Jesus the preeminence to conduct His ministry, close to Jerusalem. He was not in competition with Jesus!

So the ministry of John the Baptist is overlapping the ministry of Jesus and there could have been some trouble, some confrontation as word spreads to the disciples of John the Baptist what Jesus is doing.

So this is setting the stage for what transpires next and thus, I have called these verses we read – ***THE SET-UP!***

And I think you can see what is being set-up here – ***THE CONFRONTATION!***

Let’s read on and see what unfolds for us.

VERSES 25-26

I am always amazed, and I shouldn’t be, but I am, at how God is doing a work and, many times, because of jealousy, others come against it. And because of that sometimes the work comes to an end! And Satan is ready to jump in and divide and conquer!

As Christians, that should not be. We should be excited as God uses others for the work He is doing. We should be excited as God raises someone up to do a work. And we should be excited when God is using someone even more than us.

And please understand that we all have to deal with this from time to time. And yes, even those who are popular in ministry, those who people look up to. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Dr. F. B. Meyer told the following experience to a few personal friends:

“It was easy,” he said, “to pray for the success of Campbell Morgan when he was in America, but when he came back to England and took a church near to mine, it was somewhat different.

The old Adam in me was inclined to jealousy, but I got my heel upon his head, and whether I felt right toward my friend or not, I determined to act right.

My church gave a reception for him, and I acknowledged if it was not necessary for me to preach Sunday evenings, I would dearly love to go and hear him myself. Well, that made me feel right toward him. Just see how the dear Lord helped me out of my difficulty. There was Charles Spurgeon preaching wonderfully on the other side of me. He and Mr. Morgan were so popular and drew such crowds that our church caught the overflow, and we had all we could accommodate.”

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

I know I have said this before, but it is not about us, never was and never will be!

It is always about the Lord and what He wants to do. And sometimes He will use us and sometimes He will use others and praise the Lord that He does use us!

Here in John, we see trouble coming. We see some Jews as well as news coming back on what Jesus and His disciples are doing and this made the disciples of John the Baptist jealous!

Remember that it was John the Baptist who had the huge following and now things are changing. Jesus was gaining a following and theirs is shrinking. They saw Jesus in competition with them and they didn't like it so they go and tell their leader, John the Baptist about this so he could rectify the problem.

As I have said, jealousy can grow, and it can be destructive. We need to be careful that we rest in the Lord, and we rejoice in the work that God is doing through other Christians and Christian ministries. It is not all about us and we will deal with that in a few minutes.

Now, let me show you how this works. We are told,

In a home where a lady had two canary cages, one on either side of a window, a visitor made some comment about the birds. Whereupon the hostess remarked that one of the canaries was exceedingly jealous.

She then proved her statement.

Going to the cage of the bird that was not jealous, she began petting it, calling it pretty names and chatting with it.

The reaction of the other canary was remarkable.

Its feathers ruffled up, it fluttered all about the cage and made angry squawks of protest.

There was no question about its jealous nature. Man, too, displays a jealous nature by his actions.

Remember the story of King Saul and his jealousy over the young kid named David. That jealousy caused many problems in the life of Saul, and it affected David. David loved Saul, he respected him because God had placed King Saul in that position.

And David blessed King Saul in many different ways and those blessings became objects of his jealousy!

David became a mighty warrior, but the King was upset because David was getting more praise than he was, especially when David killed Goliath!

And this jealousy grew so much that Saul wanted to kill David, to get rid of this troublemaker. But David was not a troublemaker. He was a young man that was used mightily by God and because of that, it made King Saul jealous, and he sought to end David's life!

That is what jealousy will do. It destroys relationships, friendships, marriages, churches and you get the idea.

And that sin of jealousy in King Saul's life brought destruction to his own life as well as it affects the lives of many others.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

A sense of jealousy, envy, rivalry and competition is clearly evident there. John's disciples were upset that Jesus, whom John had introduced, was now setting up a rival camp just . . . down the river and winning more people than John was.

Competition is one of the most dangerous things to enter the family and people of God. A sense of rivalry between ministries is one of the devil's most effective tools to impede the progress of the gospel.

Here it was a competitive baptism. The crowds that once came flocking to hear John are now going to hear Jesus and following after him. They were involved in the old numbers game, which is still prominent today.

Who gets more? Who is the most popular? Whom do the crowds go to hear and follow?

Involved also was an argument about the meaning of baptism. Evidently some Jew questioned the meaning of Jesus' baptism, feeling that John's baptism was but an extension of the Jewish rite of purification (when your sins were forgiven you took a bath) which was mentioned in the Law.

But now Jesus was baptizing. They could not understand that, so they came to ask John about it.

- <https://bit.ly/3qPW0CC>

Again, look at what is going on here. John the Baptist's ministry was growing, more and more people were following him and the work that he was doing, and everyone was happy. Well, not everyone. Not the Jewish religious leaders.

But the disciples of John the Baptist were happy as people were following the message of repentance, of preparing the hearts for the coming Messiah!

But now they are upset, and it is interesting that what John was doing, what he was preparing the people for, the coming Messiah, had come! But they are not happy, they wanted to continue doing what they were doing and now it seems like this Jesus and His men were taking that away from them.

So the disciples of John the Baptist come to him and want John to rectify this problem, to do something about it, to kind of jump start his ministry once again so their following will begin to grow once again

The disciples of John come to him with their concerns, their complaints.

And how John the Baptist answers their question can bring healing or division!

Listen to how John responds because his response is great!

VERSES 27-30

Let me give you an overview of what is going on here and then I want to focus on this point – ***ABSOLUTE SURRENDER!***

Keep in mind that the disciples of John the Baptist were concerned that they were going to lose what they had, this following. So that is what John the Baptist is answering first, this concern of losing this following and their ministry decreasing.

And I like that John the Baptist is reminding them that everything that they have is a gift from God and it should be received with joy, with thankfulness.

In this we see the humility of John the Baptist because he recognizes that all he has is a gift from God; he is nothing apart from God.

May we not forget that. I think too often it is all about us and what we have done instead of praising and thanking God for all He has done, what He has given to us.

From saying that all is a gift of God and being thankful, John then speaks of a Jewish wedding. And he is saying, in a sense, that he is the best man at the wedding of Jesus and His followers, the Jews and ultimately the Church, which is the bride of Christ.

Thus, it is more important for the bride to come to the bridegroom than the best man, isn't it?

Of course it is!

Of this illustration, William Barclay makes these comments. He wrote,

The "friend of the bridegroom," the *shoshben*, had a unique place at a Jewish wedding. He acted as the liaison between the bride and the bridegroom; he arranged the wedding; he took out the invitation; he presided at the wedding feast. He brought the bride and the bridegroom together.

And he had one special duty.

It was his duty to guard the bridal chamber and to let no false lover in. He would only open the door when in the dark he heard the bridegroom's voice and recognized it.

When he heard the bridegroom's voice, he was glad and he let him in, and he went away rejoicing, for his task was completed and the lovers were together.

He did not grudge the bridegroom the bride. He knew that his only task had been to bring bride and bridegroom together.

And when the task was done, he willingly and gladly faded out of the center of the picture.

- William Barclay, John, pp. 143-144

Thus, John recognized his work was coming to an end and he said these powerful words, **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** John 3:30.

Those seven words are at the heart or should be at the heart of any true ministry, that Jesus is lifted up, that people are drawn to Him and not to us. We need to have Jesus become more visible, greater in our lives and to have less of us visible, less of that flesh life coming through!

And let me say this. Those are not easy words for us to say but they are needful for us to say, “**He must increase, but I must decrease.**” John 3:30.

And what could have turned out in a fight or argument for a person’s rights, that is not what we see here as John recognized that God was in control, and he was joyful to serve the Lord at any capacity.

Jesus is the focus.

Bruce put it like this, “*John betrays no sense of envy or rivalry. It is not easy to see another’s influence growing at the expense of one’s own; it is even less easy to rejoice at the sight. But John found his joy completed by the news which his disciples brought.*”

Now let’s focus on this idea of absolute surrender because, in these verses we see the heart of a servant as he surrenders his will unto the Lord, he submits to the will of God in his life.

And I see in these verses the three-fold action that needs to be done in our life if we are truly going to submit to God.

And, as I have said, this is important for each of us.

First it is *upward*, then *inward* and then it is manifested in our *outward* actions. Let’s look at these points and as we examine our own walk, in areas that we need to change, may we hear and obey what the Lord is showing us!

UPWARD SUBMISSION – JOHN 3:27-28

You have to start somewhere and the best place to start, the only place to start in regard to submission is upward, submitting to God, recognizing who He is and giving Him the honor that is due His Name.

In John 3:27-28 we are told, **“John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’”**”

That is the correct perspective to have, that we can do nothing without the Lord, He has enabled us to serve Him.

In fact, we read in Revelation 4:11, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”** KJV.

We are created for His good pleasure and thus, true joy; true satisfaction is found in doing His will!

Make no mistake about it, we truly cannot do anything without Him.

Paul put it this way in Acts 17:24-25, **“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.”**

Each day we wake up is a gift from God, we have no guarantees in life, how long we will live, but as we are blessed with another day let us use it to bring glory to God, submitting to His will for our lives.

In James 4:7 we are told, “**Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**”

The Greek word for “**submit**” is HUPOTASSO and it was primarily used as a military term meaning “*to rank under.*”

Here it is in the passive form which speaks of this submission being voluntary.

What does that mean?

It means that God does not force us to submit to Him but allows us to make those choices for ourselves!

James is telling us that we need to place our lives under the authority of God, to submit to His will, to obey Him.

That truly is the first step, recognizing who God is and submitting to His will, that He is in control, which leads us to the second aspect of surrender or submission, which is inward.

INWARD – JOHN 3:29

This second aspect, inward, truly speaks of our heart.

For John the Baptist we read in John 3:29, “**He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.**”

John the Baptist was joyful because He not only knew God’s will for his life, but he was willing to submit to God’s will, and in that is great joy.

He saw his position of being the best man at the wedding of Jesus and His bride, the Jews and ultimately the church as I have said. And he willingly submitted to the task that was before him.

I like the way that Paul put it in Romans 6:16-17, where he said, **“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”**

You see, we have two choices to make, two choices before us, to obey the Lord, or to disobey the Lord, which also comes from our heart.

Obedience leads to freedom, joy, peace and-so-on.

On the other hand, disobedience leads to bondage; you become a slave to that which you are doing.

There is a price to pay if we refuse to submit to God’s will, to surrender to His authority. You can be a slave to sin or a bondsman unto the Lord, freely serving Him!

You may agree with me on this, or you may not, but I truly believe that which is most important to you, where your treasure is at, that you will do, you will surrender your time, submit yourself to the task that is before you.

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:21, **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

It is amazing what we make time for and then, to go to church, we have all kinds of excuses why we can’t make it. It is a choice, and what is important, that we will do no matter what! What is the passion of your heart?

If your treasure is the Lord, then that will be reflected in your heart and your submission to His authority in your life, to his will.

If the Lord is not your treasure, you will do whatever you want; you will do your own thing, refusing to submit to God's direction, His leading, you are your own god!

We have seen that our submission, our surrender is upward with God, inward in our hearts, and lastly it is outward in our actions.

And please understand that these do overlap with each other, they are very closely linked to each other.

OUTWARD – JOHN 3:30

When I speak of submission being outward, I am speaking of our actions, the things we do, the things we say, the nature that flows from our lives.

For John the Baptist, this is what his life was like; this is what he wanted manifested in his life, the Lord Jesus as he said in John 3:30, "**He must increase, but I must decrease.**"

John speaks forth seven powerful words that show us what he wanted manifested from his life, what he wanted flowing from his life, and it wasn't all about him, but all about Jesus, for he wanted people to see Jesus in him!

Jesus also gives us the perfect example of submission to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before He was crucified.

He came into the Garden "*sorrowful*" and "*distressed.*"

The cross was only hours away, and the pain, the suffering; the separation from the Father as He bore the sins of the world, was on His mind.

And I believe one of the greatest spiritual battles took place in this Garden on that night.

It was a battle between the flesh and the spirit; they were warring with each other.

The flesh was trying to persuade Jesus not to go to the cross, the spirit was persuading Jesus to do the Father's will, to go to the cross, to finish the work that was before Him, paying in full the penalty for our sins on the cross of Calvary.

Who won?

Listen to what we are told in Matthew chapter 26, and I think you will clearly see His submission.

We are told, **“He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” . . . “Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.” . . . “So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”** Matthew 26:39, 42, 44-46.

You see, Jesus went into the Garden of Gethsemane in distress, in agony, being sorrowful, sweating drops of blood and He left at peace.

Why?

Because He submitted to fulfill the Father's will and I believe that is true in our own lives.

The problem too often for us is we know God's will, but we just refuse to submit to it, and we wrestle with God, like we are going to win!

You may remember the story of Jacob in the Old Testament. He wrestled with God, and he didn't win, in one sense, but in another, he truly did, as we shall see in a minute.

Jacob's name means heel-catcher, conniver, deceiver, schemer, and it truly matched his life, his actions.

Jacob had a twin brother who was slightly older than Jacob, probably only minutes, named Esau. In fact, when Esau was born, Jacob was holding onto his heel, I don't know why, maybe to try and pull him back in so he could get out first.

Even in the womb we are told that these boys were fighting, talk about your sibling rivalry!

Now as these boys grew up one day Esau was out hunting, and he caught nothing.

Frustrated and starving he headed home and as he got closer and closer, he began to smell the cooking of some bean soup.

As he got home, he saw that his brother Jacob was making it and he wanted it so badly.

Jacob, schemer, decided to give him this bowl of bean soup for the rights of the firstborn from Esau.

For Esau, at this point, the bean soup was more important to him than his birthright, so he sold it to his brother Jacob for a bowl of bean soup!

Later on, as their father Isaac was very old and sick, nearly blind, and Isaac was going to give the blessing of the first born to Esau, but Jacob disguised himself and received the blessing instead. When Esau found out he wanted to kill Jacob and as Jacob is told he flees to his uncle Laban's house, and he spends the next 20 years there before he returns home.

On his way home he is traveling with his wives and children, all his servants and animals he acquired in his service to his uncle Laban, and he is not sure if Esau is still mad at him, if he wants Jacob dead still.

So he is scheming, he is coming up with a plan to see if his brother is still mad at him, sending his servants on ahead with gifts for Esau, kind of trying to smooth things over before he meets Esau.

And the night before Jacob spends the night alone, probably thinking things over, scheming again, and trying to figure a way out of this situation he was in.

And in Genesis 32:24-28 we see Jacob wrestle with God as we read, **“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, I will not let You go unless You bless me!’ So He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob.’ And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’”**

You know there are some fights you can’t win and with God, if you fight against Him, wrestle Him; even if you can win you would lose!

Jacob refused to surrender to God, he fought Him, and God touched the socket of his hip and crippled him. For Jacob, he could not defeat God, that was not the issue. The issue was – ***ABSOLUTE SURRENDER!***

Now it does seem cruel that God did that to Jacob, crippled him. Why did He do that?

You have to understand that heart of Jacob, he tried to run away, escape from his problems, to scheme his way out, and now God has his attention because he can’t run away, he is not going to be able to scheme his way out of this one, and thus, he is going to have to depend on God.

It is at this point that God changes his name from Jacob, heel-catcher, schemer, conniver, deceiver to Israel or governed by God or God rules!

So in losing the battle to God, he actually won!

You may remember the story that took place back in February of 2002 when a man named John reported to the police that he had been beaten up and robbed in the parking lot of a Wisconsin casino.

When the police arrived on the scene, John looked bad. His face was bashed in, bruised and cut up and as they took the report from him of what happened, everything seemed to fit the picture of a brutal beating and robbery.

That was until a few days later when there was a video tape that showed up at the police station that showed something completely different.

As the police viewed this parking lot surveillance video, they saw this man John beat himself up by banging his head against a light pole, smudging dirt on his cheeks, and then he went to check out the damage to his face by looking in his car's mirror, and seeing it wasn't enough, he went back to the pole for another self-inflicted pounding!

What in the world was he doing? Did he lose his mind? Was he crazy? Why did he do this?

Well, apparently, John had lost so much money at the casino, he concocted this story to try and fool his wife. But the video tape busted him.

Now we don't know, we don't have video footage of what John looked like after his wife was done with him, but I am sure it wasn't pretty, and that is another story!

Maybe some of you are in situations like that this morning, not knowing what to do, well, maybe you know what you need to do, what God wants you to do but you refuse to submit to His will, and you are scheming, conniving, trying to figure a way out.

Stop wrestling with God and submit to His will for your life. Let your actions speak of where your heart and mind are at, in the Lord!

I think Paul gives to us a beautiful picture of a person who is fully submitted unto the Lord, not perfect, because none of us are, but their hearts desire is to serve Him and submit to His leading that is done by the Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians 5:18-21 we are told, **“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Do you see how beautiful that is, submitting unto the Lord and that is seen in our lives as we are joyful and submit to one another, not concerned about ourselves, but others.

In the church today, many times, it is all about us, and that should not be the way we act or respond. You see, it is all about Him, about Jesus and others, and as we submit to that, our needs will be met, that is just how God works.

On the other hand, if we are focusing all on ourselves, I don't believe we are ever satisfied, there is always something wrong, something that is not fair, something that we should have that we don't and we will not find true joy, true satisfaction until we submit unto Him fully.

If you are struggling this morning with submission, not only to God but to those who God has placed in authority over you, you need to give it to the Lord.

Like John the Baptist, it is very simple, “**He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.**”

Or as The Living Bible puts it, “**He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.**” John 3:30.

May that be our hearts desire, that the flesh life would melt away, that people would see Jesus in us.

Too often it is all about us as I have said, but not for John the Baptist, it was all about Jesus and may we have that heart’s desire to reflect the love, the joy, the peace of Jesus in our lives. May we not just be a container to hold God but a channel or vessel from which God can flow through and touch others, refreshing them and filling them.

But that will never happen unless you first look upward unto God and submit to Him, that He is in control.

You need to submit inwardly that your heart will be in tune with His heart.

Which will lead you into a submission outwardly, in your actions, how you treat people, how you live.

If you are struggling with people, if there is not that Agape love for people, if you are fighting or holding grudges, then you are not submitting upward, your inward heart is not right and thus, it is manifested in how you are treating people!

May we completely submit our lives unto the Lord who loves us and cares for us more than we will ever know, He has what is best for our lives, even though it may not always be easy, He will see us through it all.

You don’t want your life to be shipwrecked because you refuse to submit to Him, do you? As we read on, we will see the last point – ***THE CORRECT PERSPECTIVE!***

VERSES 31-36

Notice what John is telling us here. That God has sent His son, Jesus, to become flesh and dwell among us. Thus, what Jesus speaks He does so with authority because He has not only been with the Father, but they are One, their natures are the same.

And God the Father gave God the Son in His Incarnation the fullness of the Spirit, **“For God does not give the Spirit by measure,”** or He doesn’t or didn’t just measure it out to Him.

The conclusion of this is that whoever believes in Jesus; receives Him by faith into their lives, has everlasting life and whoever doesn’t will see the wrath of God come upon them, the judgment for sin.

See, our sins have been paid in full by Jesus, He bore God’s wrath as He hung on the cross and thus, we have life in Him.

And I realize that some try to soften the wrath of God today so not to offend people, I guess they want to make people feel more comfortable. But you can’t do that. Let me explain.

One writer put it like this, ***“The word does not mean a sudden gust of passion or a burst of temper. Rather, it is the settled displeasure of God against sin. It is the divine allergy [dislike] to moral evil, the reaction of righteousness to unrighteousness.”*** (Tenney)

And think about this for a minute. You can’t say to God, ***“I reject your Son, Jesus Christ, but I still want the free gift of eternal life!”*** It does not work that way. The gift is found in the Son and thus, to reject the Son you reject His gift!

Also, Morris points out, ***“The wrath of God’ is a concept which is uncongenial to many modern students, and various devices are adopted to soften the expression or explain it away. This cannot be done, however, without doing great violence to many passages of Scripture and without distracting from God’s moral character.”***

And lastly, Barclay makes this interesting point. He wrote, “***It is not that God sends wrath upon him; it is that he brings that wrath upon himself.***”

Also, keep in mind that we are dealing with a people, the Jews, who were committed to the Law, keeping it for their salvation. And yet, did you notice that you do not see anything dealing with the keeping of the Law, obeying the Golden Rule, with going to church, with tithing, with just doing the best that you can, working your way into heaven.

The reason you don’t see it is because that is not how you enter in!

John makes it very simple, “**He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**” John 3:36. ***BELIEVE*** not ***WORK*** your way in! It doesn’t get any simpler than that!

If you don’t have the correct perspective, then you are going to miss the whole point! And John has that correct perspective.

And if we truly believe all that God has told us in His Word. If we truly believe that Jesus is Almighty God who has come to save us from our sins. If we truly believe that God knows all, and He has what is best for our lives. Then why can’t we give to Him our – ***ABSOLUTE SURRENDER?***