



The Gospel of John: *Know Jesus and Live*

Part 7

John 3:16-21

I. Introduction/Review

- Last week we began a study of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus from John 3. Thus far we have learned that...
 1. New birth (regeneration) is necessary to see the kingdom (be saved) (John 3:1-2).
 2. New birth means being cleansed from our sin and made alive by the Spirit of God (John 3:5).
 3. New birth comes from God alone (John 1:13; 3:5-8).
 4. The fruit of the new birth is faith in Jesus (John 3:12-15).
 5. Anyone who evidences this fruit of the new birth can know that they have eternal life (John 3:15)
- Today we pick up the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus with a discussion of what motivates God to grant new birth...his incredible love.

II. How deep is God's love? You cannot reach the bottom of the ocean of God's deep love. Yet you can begin to appreciate the depth of God's love by observing two things; the unworthiness of the recipients and the preciousness of the gift.

The unworthiness of the recipients

(1) We are criminals guilty of high treason

- Jesus himself declares that the greatest of all commandments is...
 - ❖ Matthew 22:37-38--*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment.*
 - Some will read this and say, "I do that every now and then." We must realize that saying that is like saying, "I refrain from murdering every now and then." This commandment is not to be obeyed sometimes. It is to be obeyed perfectly from birth. Failure to do this makes us frequent breakers of God's greatest commandment. Criminals guilty of high treason. Would anyone dare claim that they have accomplished this perfectly from birth?

(2) We are God's enemies

- ❖ James 4:4--*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
- ❖ James 4:6--*God opposes the proud,*
- ❖ Romans 5:10--*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*

(3) We are under God's wrath

- ❖ Psalm 5:4-6--*For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. 5 The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. 6 You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*
- ❖ Ephesians 2:1-3--*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*



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— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- ❖ John 3:31--*whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
- ❖ Revelation 21:8--*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.*
 - All of this is to simply say that if you think you deserved God's love, you are dead wrong. You and I deserve nothing but God's wrath for all eternity.



The preciousness of the gift

(1) God the Father gave his only Son

- I fear we tend to over emphasize and misunderstand the “sacrificial nature” of God the Father sending his son. In no way is God the Father losing Jesus to gain us. He does not value us above his own son. John 3:16 does not say that he gave “up” his only son. God the Father sent Jesus knowing that Jesus would return to him as the glorious Lord of salvation who has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).
- What then makes this gift so great? How exactly does sending Jesus demonstrate God's love for us? The greatness of this gift is not measured by what God the Father was willing to lose. It is measured by what he was willing to give. God is willing to deploy the absolute best on behalf of the worst. God didn't send some lesser person to accomplish our salvation, he sent a person of infinite worth, majesty, and glory to redeem a people of ruin and disgrace. The Jewish people knew that God would send a Messiah, but they never in their wildest dreams imagined that the messiah would be God himself.

(2) The Angels

- ❖ 1 Peter 1:12--*It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*
 - That little phrase at the end, “things into which angels long to look,” tells us that the angels of heaven wonder what it's like to be loved by God this way. They wonder what it might be like to be unrighteous and worthy of destruction and yet have God the Father send Jesus to put on their flesh and bear the wrath of the Father for them that they may stand justified before God.

(3) The Old Testament

- The concept of a pure and spotless savior being sent by God to redeem the unworthy is certainly not a concept exclusive to the New Testament. This loving gift from the Father was foreshadowed in Old Testament in the book of Hosea. Hosea was a prophet. A man of God. A holy man set apart for service unto the Lord. Yet God sends Hosea on a peculiar mission. He is sent to marry a whore named Gomer. A woman who has been faithless. A woman who would have been regarded as worthless. The average price for a slave was 30 shekels of

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silver. Gomer was so unvalued that it only cost Hosea half that to make Gomer his wife. Yet God showed his tremendous love by sending his holy messenger to redeem her. Upon paying the necessary price to redeem her, Hosea says to his bride...

❖ Hosea 3:3-- *"You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore, or belong to another man; so will I also be to you."*

- So also has God the Father sent the one and only Son of God to say to his bride... "You're days of ruined depravity are over. You will belong to no one else ever again because I have redeemed you. You will be mine and I will be yours forever and ever."

III. How wide is God's love?

Much wider than Nicodemus thought possible

- Nicodemus' experience was summed up beautifully by world renown theologian and worship leader Matthew Carpenter who said on Facebook, "Imagine you're a Jew around 20-70 A.D. and your whole life you've been told that God loved Israel out of the whole world. Now imagine that you read this book by a guy named John and you get to Chapter 3, verse 16. What? It's not just the Jews God loves but people around the world?"¹

Much wider than Nicodemus wanted it to be

- Nicodemus was a pharisee. The pharisees were a group of people who purposed to preserve the purity of the law by keeping out foreign influences. They falsely believed that God was for them and them only. The thought of God being gracious and merciful to gentiles would have caused a reaction very similar to Jonah's reaction when God told him to preach to Nineveh.
 - ❖ Jonah 4:1-2--*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster*

Much wider than we think possible and we want it to be

- If we are going to be completely honest with ourselves, we must admit that every single one of us has thought "they're beyond salvation." Sometimes we think think this about various people groups like terrorists, atheists, sex offenders, serial killers, and people of other faiths. Sometimes we think this about people we know personally. We think that especially worldly neighbor or co-worker would never want to become a christian. However, we must remember that the Gospel is not the power of *human will* unto salvation. The Gospel is the power of *God* unto salvation. The love of God which saves us can and will save anyone, from anywhere, no matter what they've done, and we must never assume otherwise.
- If we are going to be completely honest with ourselves again, we must admit that every single one of us has thought "they deserve God's wrath." Sometimes we think think this about various people groups like terrorists, atheists, sex offenders, serial killers, and people of other faiths. Sometimes

¹ Matthew Leon Carpenter, Facebook.



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we think this about people we know personally. Beloved, we must not do this. In thinking such thoughts we are foolishly wishing on others what we ourselves deserve.

The Bible does NOT teach universalism

- Many read John 3:16-17 and come to the conclusion that Jesus has made atonement for every single person on the planet. However, this simply isn't the case. Jesus made atonement for those who would believe in him. Those who would be born again by the sovereign work of Holy Spirit.
- ❖ John 3:18-21--*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.*
 - Here, we clearly see that not everyone receives the new birth. Not everyone believes. Not everyone is saved. The righteous come to the light so that all their salvation and the good works they do as a result of their salvation will bring glory to God who has done all of this through them. The wicked hide in the darkness for they fear the judgement they face. All of this begs the question...

Why does God not grant everyone new birth? Couldn't God have saved everyone?

- Some choose to answer this question by responding "God is a gentlemen. He would never violate your free will." Such people forget a very important truth. That truth is that being born again is just like being born in that it has absolutely nothing to do with human will. This is not just an opinion either it is the clear truth of scripture.
 - ❖ John 1:12-13--*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*
 - ❖ Romans 9:16--*So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy*
 - ❖ 1 Peter 1:3--*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*
- The real answer is not hidden from us. God knowing that this would be a mighty struggle for our minds to comprehend and our souls to embrace has placed the answer in his Word.
 - ❖ Romans 9:21-23--*Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory —*
 - God's justice and wrath are attributes that must be displayed to the world that he might be worshipped as the holy, just and wrathful God that he is.
 - God's love is all the more glorious when we behold the justice and wrath we deserve and yet receive love.

IV. Conclusion



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- This most famous of all passages teaches us of the unsearchably deep love of God. God demonstrates this depth by sending the infinite, unchanging, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, Lord of creation, the only Son, the second person of the Trinity, the one and only Jesus Christ to accomplish the salvation of a people most undeserving.
- This most famous passage teaches us that even though not all will be saved. God's glorious work saves more people than we can imagine. It is not restricted by age, race, socio-economic status. It saves people that we probably wouldn't. It takes terrorists like Saul and makes of them apostles named Paul. It transforms atheists into evangelists. It transforms murders into ministers of the Gospel. It transforms people who worship false God's into children of the one true God and it does so without any help from us whatsoever. This is what this passage is all about. This is the love of God.