

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

**For God So Loved the World
John 3:17-21
Part 5**

Hopefully we are this weekend living in the power of the resurrected Christ. But this cannot be done if we are unwilling to expose our lives to the light of His holiness.

Unfortunately many professing Christians are choosing to hide themselves in the shadows of their own self-deception, afraid to come out into the light lest they see things that they really don't want to see.

Hopefully this does not describe you. Hopefully your desire is to present your body as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God. If this is your desire, and if this is what you are actually doing, then you are not only living your life in the power of the resurrected Christ, flying above all those things that would seek to hold you down; such as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, but you are enjoying far more.

This leads us back to **John 3:16-21** which we began to study several weeks ago and which we will finish this weekend. Let me read the passage for you, "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (19) And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (21) But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.**" These verses are the reflections of the Apostle John on the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in **John 3:1-15**.

Because these verses are the reflections of John on what he had just recorded we have been asking the following question. What were the reflections of the Apostle John in John 3:16-21 that were generated by Jesus conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1-15?

In response to John 3:1-15 the Apostle John first of all reflected on the love of God for the world (John 3:16). Certainly there can be no doubt about this. How does **John 3:16** begin, "**For God so loved the world.**"

What else does the Apostle John reflect on in response to the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:1-15?

In response to John 3:1-15 the Apostle John secondly reflected on God's rescue mission to the world (John 3:16-21). And this reflection does not only consume the rest of **John 3:16** but goes all the way down through **John 3:21**.

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John, in reflecting on God's rescue mission, first of all described it in terms of its *cost*. Let us continue to read the verse, "**For God so loved the world** (this hostile place filled with the enemies of God) **that He gave His only begotten Son.**" What did God's rescue mission cost Him? He gave up to death on the cross His only begotten Son, in other words "His unique Son" who had been with Him since the beginning. And why did He do this? He gave up His only begotten Son to death on the cross to pay the debt of our sins.

But John is not only concerned with describing God's rescue mission in terms of cost John, in reflecting on God's rescue mission, also describes the rescue mission in terms of its *benefits*. Let us continue to read **John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** In this verse he mentions two rather general benefits.

The first benefit of God's rescue mission for all those who believe is being delivered from God's final *judgment*. What does the verse say, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish.**" Or in other words, the first benefit of God's rescue mission for all those who believe is being delivered from the eternal torment of hell, which is described as an unquenchable fire and where their worm will never die. Now that is good news.

But the Apostle John mentions another very important benefit. Let us continue to read **John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** What is the second benefit?

The second benefit of God's rescue mission for all those who believe is that they will be granted the gift of eternal *life*. And what exactly is eternal life?

Eternal life comprises all the wonderful things that come to us as a result of our spiritual union with the life of *Christ*. And of course we have taken two weeks to detail for you several of those wonderful things. But now we are ready to move on.

In reflecting on God's rescue mission, John has first of all described the rescue mission in terms of its cost. Then he described the mission in terms of its benefits, but there is something else that John wants to describe in **John 3:17-21**.

John, in reflecting on God's rescue mission, describes it in terms of the world's response (John 3:17-21). You would think that everyone would be responsive to a rescue mission that had as much at stake as God's rescue mission, but we will see that this is just not true.

In developing this thought the apostle begins with **John 3:17**. Let me read this verse for you, "**For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.**"

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The word ‘**for**’ links **verse 17** with **verse 16**. And why did John do this? He wanted to drive home the point that God’s love for this world, which moved Him to send His Son into this world, was not in any way an attempt on His part to judge the world but rather totally, and completely an attempt on His part to save it. Yes, some people unfortunately, even tragically, will be participants in the final judgment but this cannot be blamed on God’s rescue mission (John 3:17). In order to make this perfectly clear, two arguments are advanced in **John 3:18-20**. What is the first argument?

The first argument is this: God’s rescue mission gives everyone the opportunity through faith in Christ to be set free from divine judgment. In other words God’s rescue mission gave everyone an equal chance of jumping on board. We see this equal chance in **John 3:18**. Let me read for you **John 3:18, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."**

The only thing that was required if a person was going to benefit from God’s rescue mission was to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. So how could someone blame God if they didn’t? If they believed a very good thing would happen and if they did not believe a very bad thing would happen?

What was the very good thing that would happen if they believed? Those who have believed in Jesus are not presently judged. Isn’t this what the verse says, **"He who believes in Him is not judged."** Those who have believed in Jesus are not presently judged because they are now enjoying peace with God and the confident expectation of a better future. And of course this is very good thing! Unfortunately this is not true for all. There are those who obviously have chosen not to believe. And for those individuals a very bad thing has happened.

What is that? Those who have not believed in Jesus are judged already. Isn’t this what the verse says, **"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged (or condemned) already"** Those who have not believed in Jesus are judged already because they are not presently enjoying peace with God and have no hope of a better future. Those who have not believed in Jesus are spiritually speaking on death row awaiting God’s final judgment when they will be cast into the Lake of Fire. They are like "dead men walking." This weekend everyone in this room is either in one group or the other.

Why did the apostle write verse 17? The apostle John wrote verse 17 to make sure that we understand that God’s rescue mission was not intended to condemn the world but to save the world. Yes, there are people, in spite of God’s rescue mission who can be considered as having been judged already. God’s purpose in sending his Son was to give every individual in this world the opportunity to be rescued. And hopefully we will keep this in our minds as we share Christ.

Let me ask you this question: Why do we preach Christ? Do we preach Christ in order to tell people that they are doomed and have no hope? No! It is to call people to salvation, to new life, and to glory.

Christ’s call in the gospel is one hundred percent positive: He came that sinners might have life, and have it abundantly according to **John 10:10**.

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If this is true then why does the apostle in **John 9:39** say, "**For judgment I have come into the world.**" This might be somewhat confusing. But hopefully you can think of it in terms of the sun, which rises and sets each day. When you think of the sun and all the ways the sun is important to us I doubt if you think of shadows. But shadows are the natural consequence of the sun's life-giving rays. And the same thing is true in respect to the judgment John is speaking about in **John 9**. God wants to rescue us, but if we refuse to be rescued and choose not to believe in Christ, don't think that our hardened heart of unbelief will not cast the shadow of judgment. It will, and Jesus in **John 9:39** is making sure that we do not miss the point.

Yes it is true that Christ's call to the unsaved in the gospel is one hundred percent positive, but unfortunately the response to the gospel so often times is not. But is this the fault of God's rescue mission? No! God's rescue mission gives every person who hears the gospel the same chance to believe.

If this is true then how do we explain why one person would choose to believe in Jesus and another person will not choose to believe in Jesus? This leads us to the second argument that John uses in order to communicate why God's rescue mission cannot be blamed if people somehow, in spite of His efforts, end up as participants in the final judgment. The argument is quite simple: God's rescue mission not only provided the opportunity for people to be set free from judgment but it also provided the opportunity for people to reject the rescuer (John 3:19-20). Many people in this world rather than embracing their rescuer reject Him and demonstrate their disdain for Him by their actions (John 3:19-20). Let me read for you **John 3:19-20**.

John 3:19-20, "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." What is the light that the apostle is referring to?

The "light" John is referring to is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:4). Listen to **John 1:4 "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."**

And what is the darkness? Darkness describes all the evil and wicked things that Christ, as the light of men, would want to expose. Unfortunately as we see in **verse 19** there is a certain group of people that John identifies who love the darkness and will not come to the light because their deeds are evil and they know that by coming to the light that their evil deeds which they love will be exposed. Isn't this exactly what **verse 20** tells us, "**For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.**"

Let me ask you a question, if people truly desire to be set free from their sins would they be resistant to the gospel of Christ when the gospel is presented to them? Based on **John 3:19-20** we would have to conclude absolutely not. If people truly desire to be set free from their sins they will invariably respond to the gospel when they hear it.

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If this in fact were true, then would this have been true of Nicodemus? And the answer I believe would have to be absolutely. If Nicodemus truly wanted to be set free from his sins, he would have been able to embrace the words of Jesus concerning the new birth. But the truth is that he didn't. He loved the darkness rather than the light because his deeds were evil and he did want to come to the light lest those evil deeds be exposed.

You might be thinking that this is a very simplistic way to view the various responses that people give to the gospel of Christ, but this is what these verses are in fact teaching us and certainly we see this thought reinforced in other scriptures. What does **Isaiah 53:6** tell us? "**All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us have turned to our own way.**" This is just another way of talking about the world's love of darkness and unwillingness to expose their evil deeds to the light.

Why do people not come to Christ? Why do people not come to the light? The bottom line according to **John 3:19-20** is that they love darkness; they love the evil and wicked things that they do more.

But then there are those who do come to the light, or in other words to Christ in order to be set free from their sins and these individuals will continue to come to Christ to be set free from their sins. They will continue to put themselves in a position to have their sins exposed. They of course are not doing this in order to be saved but rather they are doing this because they are saved. They simply love the light more than they love darkness. We actually see this truth in **John 3:21**.

Let me read this verse for you, "**But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.**" Does this verse actually teach us that those who have come to Christ or in other words to the light will continue to do so? And I believe that the answer is yes.

How does **verse 21** begin? "**But he who practices the truth comes to the light,**" this is a very interesting statement. It almost seems as if John is saying that certain people do what is right by nature. But obviously we know that this can't be true. What do the scriptures teach us "**there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.**"

Because we know that people, apart from Christ, do not do what is right by nature the one described as practicing the truth must be viewed as a Christian. In other words **John 3:21** is not talking about someone who is approaching the light for the very first time, but rather it is talking about the one who has already approached the light. And what does John say this person will do? The one who in the past came to the light and who in response to this encounter with the light practices the truth will come to the light, or in other words will continue to come to the light.

Have you come to Jesus to be set free from your sins? In other words have you come to the light in order to be set free from your sins? If you have then praise God! What does the scripture teach? He who believes in Jesus is not judged. If you are one of these then you are presently enjoying peace with God and you have the certain hope of a better future.

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How can you continue to be assured of this? You can be assured of this because once you have come to the light being set free from your sins both from the penalty and power of your sins you will continue to come to the light. You will continue to present your body as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God. Oh there may be a period of time when you find yourself simply admiring the airplane rather than entrusting yourself to the airplane but it will not last. Why?

Let us continue to read the verse, "**But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.**" I will continue to come to the light, I will continue to present my body as a living sacrifice because I want the work that God has done in my life to be manifested.

Again think about **Romans 12:1**, "**I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your SPIRITUAL SERVICE OF WORSHIP.**"

CONCLUSION

We are not simply presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice simply to get airborne. We are not presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice simply to break free from everything that would hold us down. We will do this so that the good work that the Lord has done on our behalf might be manifested.

In contrast to the person who loves darkness rather than light, the Christian will continue to seek out the light, not in order to exalt himself but rather the Lord and His good work.