

For God So Loved the World | John 3:9-16 | 7/14/19

- Nicodemus did not yet understand the teachings of Jesus. | John 3:9-12
 - **Read John 3:9-12**
 - After Jesus explained to Nicodemus what it means to be "born again," to be spiritually renewed, we see that Nicodemus still did not understand.
 - **Jesus, however, felt that Nicodemus should have been able to understand. He was after all a great teacher of Israel.**
 - Nicodemus knew the Scriptures. He knew that they foretold of Jesus Christ and of the coming Messiah.
 - **Nicodemus wasn't having intellectual problems. He was having trouble believing.**
 - Nicodemus had yet to truly "believe," he was instead showing signs of disbelief as was questioning Jesus.
 - **"Born again" means "born from above," pointing to something divine and spiritual.**
 - He didn't see how these things could be possible, again using human intellect to try and understand.
 - **He was still looking at this from a worldly perspective and not one from above, one that is divine.**
 - This leads us to John 3:16 and the importance of faith and belief.
 - Salvation isn't about absolute and full intellectual comprehension. It is faith.
 - Belief in earthly and heavenly things
 - **Jesus also pointed out to Nicodemus that He had been using earthly things to teach to them about Himself.**
 - **John 3:8**
 - Jesus frequently used earthly analogies in His teachings to convey spiritual and heavenly truths.
 - **While it may be hard to comprehend the Holy Spirit fully, the results are undeniable just like the wind.**
 - **Nicodemus needed to believe in the results and impact of one having been born again.**
 - If Nicodemus was having a hard time understanding them, then how could Jesus teach him directly about heavenly things.
- The descending of the Son of Man and His ascension | John 3:13-14
 - **Read John 3:13-14**
 - Jesus then speaks of Himself and that He alone has descended from heaven, and He will then ascend back into heaven.
 - Jesus descended as the Son of Man, the Christ
 - The Son of Man is one of the names used for Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
 - **Jesus alone is worthy to reveal the truth because He alone has come down from heaven.**
 - **He alone has knowledge of the heavenly things in which He can now show them.**
 - Jesus will be lifted up.
 - Jesus now alludes to what will happen to Him a short time later.
 - Jesus not only descended from heaven, but He will return, He will be lifted up.
 - Jesus will be lifted up on the cross.
 - When Jesus is crucified, and His bruised body is on the cross. He will be lifted up.

- In the present, we now have His Spirit, who has power over evil and sin, who guides us and cares for us. Who is always watching over us and giving us protection.
 - The full effect takes place when our mortal bodies die, and our soul goes to heaven.
 - **How do you feel knowing that you have eternal life? Do you ever really stop and consider how amazing this truly is? How does God's gift of eternal life benefit you in the present?**
- For God so Loved the world that he gave his only son | John 3:16
 - ***Read John 3:16***
 - Jesus now transitions into telling Nicodemus how one can truly receive salvation, to receive eternal life.
 - **This single verse speaks volumes of truth. It shows what God thinks of the world, what it takes to receive salvation, and what that reward is.**
 - For God so loved the world
 - **Even though the world that God created has sinned against Him, has disobeyed Him and also cursed Him. God still loves sinners. God still loves the world.**
 - Our humanity makes understanding this very difficult.
 - **We know that when someone wrongs us, does evil to us, or perhaps attempts to kill us that "love" is not the first thing that comes to mind.**
 - In our minds, this person should be cast away and punished.
 - But God having been sinned against far greater than anything we could ever experience ourselves, He loved us so much that He made the ultimate sacrifice.
 - **God sought to remedy the punishment that we deserve by making a sacrifice to make a substitution for us so that we could be forgiven.**
 - God out of His great love for us sent his son to die on the cross.
 - Romans 5:6-8
 - "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person-though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-but god shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
 - **To die for someone else is the ultimate sign of love, and God did this for the whole world.**
 - John 15:13
 - "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."
 - God showed us the ultimate form of love by sacrificing Jesus Christ for us.
 - The human equivalent to this would be to sacrifice our own lives for someone else.
 - **The best we can relate to the love that God showed for us, is to consider under what circumstances would we give up our life for someone else?**
 - **Who would you die for?**
 - Most of us will have a few people in our lives that we love so much that we would give up our lives; these usually include our spouse, children, and other close family.
 - For these, we would truly give up our lives because of our deep love for them.
 - **But would we die for our enemies?**

- While we can comprehend what it means to die for our loved ones, to die for our enemies, for those who hate us is a different story.
- We have a strong love for our family, but for those in the world that hate us seek to hurt us, we do not feel that same love.
- **Could we “die” for ISIS? Could we “sacrifice” ourselves for a murderer on death row?**
- While we could not do this, this is the same love and sacrifice that Christ showed the world.
 - **Everyone is essentially on “death row” we all are going to receive the punishment that we rightly deserve.**
 - But Christ loved us anyways and showed a love that we cannot even begin to fully comprehend.
- **How do you feel when you reflect on the extent of God’s love?**
- **That whoever believes in him**
 - For a verse that is so simple, it has such a great depth and meaning to what it means to truly "believe."
 - **In verses 11-21, John uses the word believe seven times.** It is essential that we truly understand what this means.
 - **Our salvation depends on our proper understanding of this simple word "believe."**
 - If we examine the Greek word for "believe" from John 3:16, we find the true meaning.
 - Greek word for believe = pisteuo (pist-ev-o) < -Lemma (dictionary word)
 - Full Greek definition:
 - Believe, to believe in, to trust, put faith in (confidence)
 - Believe to the extent of complete trust.
 - This definition shows us that it is more than just a simple acknowledgment or something intellectual. It is far deeper.
 - **When we talk about “belief,” we are also talking about "faith."**
 - Ephesians 2:8
 - “For by grace **you have been saved through faith.** And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”
 - **What true faith or belief is not**
 - It is not intellectual knowledge alone. One cannot just intellectually be aware of Jesus to have saving faith.
 - As the demons even have this:
 - James 2:19
 - “You believe that God is one: you do well. Even the demons believe-and shudder!”
 - You cannot simply check a box on a form as if you answered the right question on a test. This is not faith.
 - It is not just an emotional experience
 - While emotions can certainly be involved, we need to be sure that we are not seeking solely an "emotional experience" as an assurance of our salvation."
 - Emotions are certainly involved, but the presence of or lack of do not constitute true belief or faith.
 - **Can emotions be relied upon, or are they fickle (frequently changing)?**
 - **Faith for salvation requires belief**

- **While intellectual knowledge alone is not enough, it is part of true belief.**
 - **We intellectually believe it to be true** that Jesus is the Son of God, He died as a sacrifice for our sins, was buried and resurrected.
 - How do we gain this knowledge?
 - Romans 10:17
 - “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.”
 - This intellectual knowledge comes from hearing the Gospel, either from a sermon or from a Christian who is merely sharing Scripture.
- **This belief MUST come from the heart.**
 - **The knowledge is then turned into something more. It is turned into faith once it involves the heart**
 - In the Book of Acts Paul was arguing with the council about Gentile converts. **Paul knew that what mattered wasn’t one’s external actions, but it was the condition of their heart.**
 - Acts 15:7-9
 - "And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the **Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe.** And God, **who knows the heart**, bore witness to them, by **giving them the Holy Spirit** just as he did to us. And he made no distinction between us and them, having **cleansed their hearts by faith.**"
 - The Gentiles heard the Gospel, they opened their hearts to its truth and God worked within them. They then had true faith for salvation.
 - **God sees into our hearts and knows if we truly believe.**
 - Romans 10:9
 - “If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
 - Our heart is where we will find God.
 - Jeremiah 29:13
 - “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”
 - **Belief and faith must come from the heart. This is where the real "you" exists.**
- **Is it possible for you to portray something on the outside, but in your heart, you believe something different?**
- **Faith for salvation requires us to put our trust in Jesus Christ and what the Scriptures testify about Him.**
 - **This is what the demons cannot do. They do not trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.**
 - If we have faith in Jesus Christ, it means that we put our full trust in Him that what He tells us in Scripture is true.
 - **Definition of the word trust**

- **"firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something."**
- We trust Him with our souls and our lives that He can do what he says.
 - Trust is far beyond intellectual knowledge. It is to fully believe that what God says is true.
 - That the truth given to us in the Gospels is something that we put our complete trust into.
 - **To check a box on a form does not imply trust.**
 - Those thousands of Christians who have died for their faith over the last 2 thousand years, these Christians externally showed their faith.
 - **If you are willing to die at the stake for your beliefs, you have complete trust in its truth.**
 - **It is to trust God, the Gospel with our lives.**
- David put His trust in God.
 - Psalms 33:4
 - "For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness."
 - Psalms 62:5-8
 - "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us."
 - David trusted God with everything. He put his heart before God and gave it all over to Him.
- **How can we attempt to relate to what this trust looks like for us today?**
- **Faith for salvation is confidence that what God has promised He is able to fulfill.**
 - When we have faith for salvation, we are confident that Jesus died on the cross and that He has forgiven our sins.
 - **Confidence is the feeling of being certain that something will happen regardless of worldly circumstances.**
 - Hebrews 11:1
 - "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"
 - To believe in something that one cannot see is faith.
 - We cannot see God in a physical form, we cannot see heaven with our eyes.
 - Yet as Christians we have faith that this is true, that we are convinced and confident that it is true even though we cannot see it.
 - **One of the greatest examples from Scripture to show us what this confidence in God looks like is Abraham.**
 - **Romans 4:16-22**
 - **Romans 4:21-22**
 - **"fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness."**
 - **How would you describe to someone how it is you can believe in something you have not seen (Christ, heaven, etc.)?**