

You must be born again

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[0 : 00] We looked today at something just fairly fundamental and basic in this question, what is a Christian? And for fanatics, that's what Christianity is. I'm sure you have colleagues and neighbours who believe exactly that.

One of my neighbours told me this, it's for rather gullible people who believe in fairy stories. It's quite nice to have them around and it's nice for them to be Christians and that's what a Christian is. They're gullible people who believe in fairy stories. For some people, Christianity would be what you see on the telly and it's usually high Anglican stuff you see on the telly.

Priests and robes and cathedrals. Really, they might say, well this is basically a tourist attraction and it is irrelevant to today.

That's what people might think. Other people might view the Christian church in a less friendly way and say that it is historically a hiding place for child abusers and hypocrites and cruelty.

[1 : 27] And some people have experiences that back that up very, very sadly. Other people, perhaps more traditionally, this would be the view you'd see on Call the Midwife.

Anybody watch Call the Midwife? This would be the view back in the 1950s, I think. Someone who tries their best and whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. Well, hopefully their good deeds. It's about being a good person. That would be the 1950s view of Christianity. And maybe, possibly, for somebody sitting here or watching, they'd say, well actually, I don't think any of those quite hitch the nail on the head.

There's something about spirituality and Christianity that I would like to find out more about. And to me it's unknown and worth investigating. Well, I hope this will land with somebody who's thinking that way.

Something worth investigating. And even, I would like to try and persuade you, something worth being. Something worth becoming. And my go-to answer is, in answer to, to respond to the question, what is a Christian?

[2 : 36] Let's find out what Jesus said. Because he's the person who invented Christianity after all. So let's find out what he said. What did Jesus say? Christianity after all.

So, just going right back to the foundations of it. We're going to look at a Christian text. Christianity is a book with a, sorry, is a religion with a book.

It comes from the book. And we're going to look at a fundamental Christian text. It's what's called a gospel. As Daniel said the other day, gospel is an old English word which actually means good news.

And the gospels, there are four gospels in the New Testament part of the Bible. They are first-hand biographies of Jesus.

And in telling the story of Jesus, they tell us the good news. And the particular gospel we're looking at is John's gospel. John's gospel claims to be, it's a perfectly believable claim, to be an eyewitness.

[3 : 39] He refers to himself as the beloved disciple. He was one of the fishermen that Jesus first engaged to be his followers. And he became an authorised spokesman for Christianity.

And the word for that person is an apostle. So that's John. He's worth listening to. And we're looking at John's gospel, chapter 3. He didn't write it in chapters.

The chapters were added in later. But we now know it as John's gospel, chapter 3. And John's gospel, chapter 3, for Christians here, would be very famous because most Christians know by heart John 3, 16.

It's a verse. We call it a verse. It's a sentence, but we call it a verse. And the verse says, And that verse actually summarises more or less everything.

It's very famous. I'm not going to just stick to that verse. I'm going to try and put it in context. But it's just worth noticing that. So we're going to look at this chapter or this section.

[4 : 53] It's an account of Jesus having a one-to-one conversation with this chap Nicodemus. Jesus was a remarkable person. He was at home addressing crowds of thousands.

And he was also at home just talking to individuals and getting alongside individuals. And here is Jesus speaking to Nicodemus. So I've got Nicodemus.

He didn't really look like that, but just for visual purposes. We're told about him. Chapter 3, verse 1. There was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council, who came to Jesus at night and said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do the signs you are doing if God were not with him.

So we learned a little bit about Nicodemus. He is ethnically Jewish. If you know anything about the Bible at all, you will know that in the first major part of the Bible, the Hebrew scriptures, there is a very strong focus on the Jewish people.

God sort of uses that particular community to demonstrate all sorts of things about himself and about human nature. And then in the New Testament, that scope explodes to include both Jew and Gentile.

[6 : 20] But he was ethnically Jewish, so he's at the centre, if you like, of God's historic purposes. It says he was a member of the Jewish ruling council. So should we think of him as like being an MP?

You know, a high up, somebody important? Jesus says to him in verse 10, you are Israel's teacher. And I wonder if this is indicating to us that he's actually something like a professor of theology, that he would be on the academic board at Jerusalem University of Theology.

He's really quite a significant man, isn't he? An MP who's also a professor of theology. And he's a respectful man.

As he speaks to Jesus, he says, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, which is a great way to start talking to Jesus. It is respectful. He isn't come sort of trying to pick a fight.

There seems to be something quite genuine about his approach and his inquiry. And I think this is going to be interesting. Whatever way you look at it, Jesus is an interesting person and he's meeting an interesting person.

[7 : 32] So let's read the first eight verses. So we've said that Nicodemus came by night and he said, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the signs or the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.

And then Jesus replies, very truly, this is a thing that Jesus does, he says, Amen, Amen, to say this is important. Amen, Amen. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

NIV says they, making it plural, which of course is true, but Jesus makes it singular, unless he, this person, is born again.

And then Nicodemus says, how can someone, how, how can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born.

Which is an interesting thought, isn't it? Geometrically at least uncomfortable, if not impossible. And then Jesus says, Amen, Amen, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and spirit.

[8 : 57] Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again.

The wind blows wherever it pleases. Wind in the original is the same word as spirit, *nevma*.

The spirit or the wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the spirit.

So that is what a little bit of conversation says. And this really seems to be a conversation around the idea of impossibility. So Nicodemus starts off saying, I will tell you an impossibility which you couldn't be doing those signs unless God was with you.

And that is a true statement. He has assessed that correctly. That is impossible. It would be impossible for you to be doing all the things you are doing unless God was with you. It is a very polite way to begin the conversation.

[10 : 08] Jesus straight away comes in with his own impossibility. And he says, well, if we want to talk about impossible things, let me give you this one. It is impossible for anyone to see or enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

That is an impossibility. And Jesus expands on this a little bit. He says, here is an impossible thing. It is impossible for you to see the kingdom, to enter the kingdom unless you are born again or born from above.

The word could mean either or both of those things. And Nicodemus is very puzzled. He says, what on earth? How can you do that? I mean, being born as a baby is one thing, but born again.

How does that happen? And Jesus says, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. So I put on one side of that barrier the kingdom and on the other side of the barrier someone trying to enter the kingdom or see the kingdom and they can't do it.

No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and Spirit. So Nicodemus says, well, how?

[11 : 37] How could this be? He's just taunting us with an impossibility. How can this be?

It's humanly impossible. So let's just stop at that bit. If we're trying to find out what a Christian is, let's stop on this bit and say, becoming a Christian is a human impossibility.

Becoming a Christian, humanly speaking, is an impossibility. So just to think of all the things that rules out. It's not a matter of Western racial privilege.

Those Westerners are Christian. Well, no, they're not. Not by human power. Becoming a Christian is a human impossibility.

Oh, well, it's actually racial groups that are non-European that have the advantage here. No, they don't. Because unless you're born again, you cannot enter the kingdom.

[12 : 46] It's not to do with racial privilege. And particularly for Jewish people, Jewish people, he was talking to a fully paid up member of the Jewish community.

You do not have the kingdom. You are not part of the kingdom. You cannot enter the kingdom unless you are born again. What a radical thing for Jesus to say.

Because as I said before, the whole Old Testament seems to give you the idea that being Jewish means that you're in God's kingdom. Well, of course, it doesn't. And Nicodemus should have realized that.

And Jesus puts his finger on it and he says, you can't enter the kingdom even if you're Jewish unless you're born again. And it's not a matter of trying harder.

You might remember when in the days of school assemblies, when I went to school assemblies, being a Christian was put across as trying harder to think of others.

[13 : 48] That was basically how it was put across. That was a Christian thing to do. But trying harder to think of others doesn't make you a Christian. In order to be a Christian, you must be born again.

And it's not adopting a culture. So maybe you have a Christian culture of dance. Well, just adopting a Christian culture of dance doesn't make you a Christian.

There may be a Christian culture of clothing. I remember my friend Stuart McNary at Holland Road Baptist Church who was converted in the culture of, who was it who said, no compromise, no surrender.

Who was that? Ian Paisley. Ian Paisley. And they all wore long black coats. And he thought, well, I want to be a Christian so I'll get a long black coat as well.

But wearing a long black coat like Ian Paisley in Northern Ireland in that group of churches doesn't make you a Christian. It isn't adopting a culture that makes you a Christian.

[14 : 56] I was told in Sri Lanka, I asked somebody in Sri Lanka, what is a Christian? They said, here's the definition of a Christian. It's somebody who doesn't smoke and who doesn't go to the cinema. But that doesn't make you a Christian.

That's not what being a Christian is. Unless you cannot be a Christian unless you are born again.

So, it is impossible without what Jesus says, born again in verse 3, and born of water and the Spirit.

That's what it says in verse 5. Now then, mine says, born of water and the Spirit. Does anybody have a different translation for those four words?

Has everybody got water and the Spirit? Okay, well, the the doesn't exist in the original. It says, water and Spirit.

So, it ties water and Spirit together closer than our English translations would make us think. I think I come to that in a moment. Flesh gives birth to flesh.

[16 : 08] Spirit gives birth to Spirit. So, looking at flesh, all it does is take you round in a circle and flesh gives birth to flesh.

It just makes more flesh. And flesh, simple way of thinking of it, is human power without God. Human power without God.

Flesh is human power without God and human power without God just makes more human power without God. It doesn't bring you into the spiritual realm.

It doesn't bring you into the kingdom. It doesn't make you a Christian. So, not intellectual power without God. So, have you noticed that clever people, it isn't clever people necessarily who become Christians.

It isn't through cleverness that you become a Christian. By God's grace, some clever people are Christians. But it's also true that some clever people are so clever that they say the most stupid things imaginable.

[17:10] It takes a really clever person to say some things that are really stupid. Do you see what I mean? Not intellectual power.

It isn't bodybuilding power. You can't fitness your way into the kingdom. Fitness has positive benefits but going to the gym and lifting weights and everything else that can't make you a Christian.

And moral power, human moral power, saying I'm going to withstand temptation, I'm going to be really strong, that doesn't make you a Christian and not religious power.

So Martin Luther, back in the days of the Reformation, did huge tasks and challenges and crawled on his bleeding knees up to the shrine at the top of the hill thinking that those religious observances could finally get him through to the kingdom but it couldn't and it doesn't and no pilgrimages or spiritual disciplines on their own, meditation, healing crystals, you name it, none of those things get us to the kingdom.

Flesh gives birth to flesh. We need the power of the spirit. So let's come to the water and spirit. So there's spirit, wind, breath, it's all the same word both in Hebrew and in Greek actually.

[18:49] So the of God, the breath, the wind, the spirit of God and water and I would like to suggest and I haven't really got time to do a lot of proof of this.

Born from above, that is the way to be in the kingdom and my proposal is that it's a hendiadis.

Okay, so I'm sure you're all pleased to know that it's a hendiadis.

Do you know what a hendiadis is? No. A hendiadis is when you take, you make one thing by combining two other things with and.

Two words put together to combine to one meaning. So one example which I found on the internet was sound and fury. It is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

Two things put together, a furious sound in other words. Or my favourite one, nice and warm. Nice and warm. So if I say to you, particularly this morning, of course you probably are, are you nice and warm?

[19:56] warm, you would say yes, I am nice and warm. And what you mean by that, I'm not asking you two questions, not saying are you nice and are you warm? I'm saying are you warm in a nice sort of way?

Are you nicely warm? That's what you understood, isn't it? Are you nicely warm? Do you feel comfortable? That's a hendiadis, that's putting two things together, nicely warm.

And my proposal is, and I think this works, that when it says water and spirit, it's putting them together, it's not saying water and the spirit, two separate things, but the watery spirit, the spirit who is like water.

And if you look carefully in the Bible, you'll often find that the spirit is referred to in a watery sort of way. So the spirit in Joel is poured out like you would with water.

You can be baptized in the spirit, so plunged as if in a shower or in a bath of water. So I'm not going to stop any further with this, but it does make it understandable.

[21:07] He's not talking about you have to be baptized, he's not talking about you have to be born in the ordinary way, although that could be as good as a possibility. But I think what he's saying is you need to be born of the spirit who is often thought of in a water-like way.

He's thought of as wind, he's thought of as water, and you need to be born of the watery spirit of God. And the wind, it says in verse 8, blows wherever it pleases.

You hear its sound but cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. So is everyone who is born of the spirit. There's something mysterious, supernatural, not controllable by human beings.

the unseen power of God, and that's what he says makes you a Christian. For somebody to become a Christian, it takes the blowing and the plunging and the working of the unseen power of God to make someone a Christian.

and if that is what Jesus says is right, and if you're a Christian, you are somebody in whom there has been the work of the unseen power of God.

[22 : 34] And it's worth telling people that because it doesn't always feel like that, does it? But let's hear what Jesus says. He says, that's what a Christian is. somebody who's born from above, born from the top, somebody who's been born from above.

A Christian is a miracle. So if you happen to be sitting next to a Christian, you're sitting next to a miracle. Get their autograph before you go home. becoming a Christian is a supernatural miracle by the unseen work of the Spirit of God.

The you becomes plural, I believe I'm correct in saying this. So although he's speaking to Nicodemus, he says, you lot, in the plural, you all, you guys, you need to be born again.

You Jewish people need to be born again. You top people need to be born again. You professors need to be born again. Everybody, you need to be born again. And if that was true for Nicodemus and his fellow Jews, how much more true for us?

Because we're far less qualified than Nicodemus. Nicodemus could have said, well, come on, I'm one of the centre of God's dealings.

[23 : 53] You need to be born again. And what about us? So most of us have no ethnic connection with Abraham. Abraham, we are raggle taggle Gentiles.

That's how we would have been looked on. The great unwashed, the barbaric, distant Gentiles who know nothing really about God, got no heritage in the things of God.

Nicodemus needed to be born again. How much more do we need to be born again? George Whitefield, the great preacher, back in the day, was asked when he went out preaching, I believe he was asked by an aristocratic lady, Mr.

Whitefield, why is it that you keep on saying you must be born again? To which Mr. Whitefield replied, Madam, because you must be born again, which I think is a very good answer.

Now, this is good news, but in some ways it's not good news, because if you're sitting there thinking, well, I would like that, I need that, you then come up against a logical problem, because hands up how many people made themselves born the first time.

[25 : 22] And for the purposes of the tape, nobody put up their hand. So if you couldn't make yourself born the first time, how are you going to make yourself born the second time?

He is talking about an impossibility. It's, yeah, it is an impossibility. It points out human inability. It points out our desperate human inability. ability. And if you're somebody seeking to become a Christian, it would do you no harm to take this to heart. It isn't something you can just do whenever you want to do it.

It isn't something you can just turn on if you so choose. You're in the right pickle, because you couldn't make yourself born the first time, and you can't make yourself born again.

it's a necessity, because you must be born again. But it's an impossibility. But you can't be born again. So that puts people in a, you know, a bit of a pickle.

[26 : 31] And it's no wrong thing if you're thinking about becoming a Christian to realise what a pickle you're in without Christ. You are in a pickle.

And people who've understood this over the history have really cried out to God. I need you to work in my life. I can't do this on my own.

I need you to change me. I need you to show me. I need you to open my eyes. Etc. So, in some ways, it's not good news.

It points out the pickle. Let's look at 9.13, 9 onwards. How can this be? Nicodemus asked.

You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus, and you don't understand these things? Amen, amen. That's again Jesus saying, this is important. Now, listen. We speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.

[27 : 46] I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you don't believe. How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man.

So let's just stop and think about this. So this is about testimony, isn't it? You don't understand this, says Jesus to Nicodemus.

You're the professor of theology, and you haven't got this fundamental thing that even the Sunday school at Calvary Church know this, and you're the professor of theology, and you didn't know this. So Jesus says, we. I've always puzzled about the we. Does he mean himself and the Holy Spirit, perhaps? Or does he mean himself and his disciples? I don't know.

But he says, and he goes on to refer to himself specifically. We speak of what we know, we testify to what we have seen.

[28 : 47] I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you don't believe. How will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man. Jesus says, I know what I'm talking about, because I've been there.

I know what I'm talking about because I've come from heaven. And this makes my teaching dependable. You can take me at my word, says Jesus.

And just again, if you are now perhaps pondering this, let me urge you, ask God to show you whether Jesus is true.

If you're uncertain about Jesus' testimony, ask God to show you whether what he says is true or not. Because if you get it from God, he is the bedrock of truth, and if he says what Jesus says is true, then you can depend upon it with your life.

you wouldn't want to depend upon anything with your life just because Philip said it was true. Because Philip makes mistakes. But if God says it's true, the God who doesn't make mistakes, then you can depend upon it with your life.

[30 : 08] And let's be clear, it is a life and death issue. So, testimony. Now then, you might be thinking, well you just said becoming a Christian is an impossible miracle, so what am I supposed to do you just hang around and wait for it to zap me?

And I say, actually there's more to it than that, because there is a person-to-person place for you to fit in with. There is a person who deals in impossibilities.

And you noticed earlier, I talked about the possibility that you have of asking God, as you might call that prayer. God is a personal being, you're a personal being, personal beings talk and listen, you can talk and listen, God talks and listen, and you can ask God, you can say to him, I heard what that chap said that morning, and it worried me a little bit because I'm not born again and I want to be born again, what can I do about it?

You can ask and he can deal with impossibilities. And what he would say to you is, I've got something I want you to do. And this is the next bit in verse 14 to 18.

So Jesus goes on and says, now listen, listen to this, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert or in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

[31 : 48] For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. Do you notice there were a succession of logical connections?

The Son of Man is lifted up, because God so loved the world and God so loved the world because he didn't send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world.

There's some connections there. And this is a reference to the Son of Man being lifted up. This is a reference that is also made later on in the Gospel.

The Son of Man is Jesus and lifted up, well, what he's actually referring to is the act of crucifixion when the victim of crucifixion is nailed to the cross and then the cross is lifted up and dropped into a hole so that it will stay upright.

[33 : 04] and everybody passing by can see this horrible sight of this person dying through dehydration and loss of blood and everything else.

That's what he means by lifted up. It's rather ironic, isn't it, because usually lifted up means exalted so that you can praise somebody, but he uses this and he says, well, this is, I'm actually referring to this place of the utmost disgrace when the son of man is lifted up, executed by cruel impalement on the cross.

Just as the snake, as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the son of man be lifted up, that those who believe may have eternal life.

Now, there's a back story to this. Shall we look at it? See if you can get somebody next to you to find an Old Testament book, Numbers chapter 21, verses 4 to 9.

Numbers 21, 4 to 9. It's on page 158 in my Bible. Have you got it?

[34 : 42] Numbers chapter 21, verse 4. Is it page 158 in yours?

Yes. Yeah. We're getting there. They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea to go round to Edom, but the people grew impatient on the way.

They spoke against God and against Moses and said, why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread, there is no water, and we detest this miserable food.

They're not very happy bunnies, are they? Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them and they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, we sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you.

Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us. So Moses prayed for the people and the Lord said to Moses, make a snake, put it on a pole, anyone who is bitten!

[35 : 47] can look at it and live. So put it on a pole, anyone who was bitten by the snake looked at the bronze snake and they lived.

So if you could imagine a pole with a snake on it. Does anybody know where that symbol is still to be found? Medicine?

Any doctors here who can tell us precisely? Is it the symbol of something medical isn't it?

It's the idea of being healed and looking at something being healed. That's where the symbol is still to be found. So they're crossing the desert from Egypt to the promised land.

The people were abusive and grumbled and God sent snakes as punishment and the result of snake bite was death. So what did Moses! what was Moses told to do?

[36 : 49] Anybody tell us hands up what was Moses told to do? Anybody under 30?

What was Moses told to do? He was told to pray and also to make a bronze snake so people could look at it.

Yeah, make a bronze snake, nail it to the pole and people could look at it. So there are people being bitten by snakes, people confess their own, Moses takes a bronze snake and those who look are healed.

There we are looking at the bronze snake. And Jesus says, now if you want to become a Christian, here's a clue, more than a clue really, here's something that is the key to this and it's like what Moses did with the bronze snake and how those people reacted to that and this is something for you now.

Now, what's he saying? How does this work? I'll tell you what I think about this. That if you go back to those days and you're crossing the desert, the thing that you fear is snake bite.

[38 : 16] It's the same in some cultures now. The thing that you most want to avoid is being bitten by snakes. If you're in the desert, you want to avoid snake bite.

If you're in the jungle, you want to be eaten by a lion. But if you're in the desert, you want to avoid being bitten by a snake. The lion is the king of the jungle and the snake is the king of the desert. But the nasty king, the one that you want to avoid. If you go back to the lion and the king of the jungle, it used to be, if you go to National Trust country houses and things, that you will see the heads of tigers and lions mounted on the wall, this is the lion that Colonel Carruthers shot back in India in 1821.

It nearly killed him, but he killed it first. And there's the lion, whenever it was. Don't quote me on the dates. And then we can look at that lion and say, he got you, didn't he?

We can mock the lion. You thought you were going to eat Colonel Carruthers, but he got you first. Like that. And I think this is what is happening with the snake on the pole.

[39 : 49] We're saying to the snake on the pole, you are going to kill those people, but look at you now, helpless, stuck on that pole, you're the defeated one.

How does this tie in with Jesus? Because Jesus is stuck on a cross, and the cross is the place that we might look and say, look at you, you thought you were the king, look at you, defeated, humiliated, disgraced, weak, stuck, look at you.

And well, we might say that to the lion or the snake, which is our enemy, but when we look at Jesus, humiliated, disgraced, weak, he's our friend.

And Jesus says, just as people looked at the snake, so you must look with faith at me upon the cross. And you must look and you must see in that picture of the disgraced, humiliated, ridiculed saviour, you must see your salvation.

How am I saved? by Jesus being mocked, humiliated, stuck up there. To me, that is the most special thing, that is the most brilliant thing, that is the thing on whom my soul depends, that is the thing by which I love him most of all, because of what happened when he was stuck up on that cross.

[41 : 49] he is not our dangerous enemy, like the lion or the snake, but our loving, sacrificing friend.

And Jesus says, just as those people looked to the snake and were healed, so now you can look to the son of man lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life.

And here's an invitation, will you look to that impaled, bleeding man on a cross? Will you look and trust in him?

Will you look and see in him the answer to all your sin, all your lostness, all the mess of your life, and say, it's all answered there.

Those who look to him in faith have eternal life. And you might be thinking, but could I do that?

[43 : 16] I'm saying, well, Jesus says, do it. Am I welcome to do that? And Jesus says, well, that's the whole point. He came so that you could look on him with faith.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only one, one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. God wants you to look with faith.

That's why he sent him, and he loved you in some absolutely unfathomable way, in the sense that he says, my love is such that I'm saying to you, look, I've given Christ so that you can look.

I'm making up promise if you look to him in faith, you will have eternal life. Come on, what's to stop you? God so loved the world that he sent his son, and he sent his son not to condemn the world, but to save the world.

So if you've never looked at Christ in faith and seen and believed, yeah, he has the answer to everything, look now, believe now, take him now as your saviour.

[44 : 29] So what are we seeing? What is a Christian? You don't become a Christian by your own personal achievement. You must be born again by the power of God.

It's a human impossibility. There is faith. There is an interpersonal aspect of believing and trusting him. Jesus knows what he's talking about.

Do you not find that as you hear the words of Jesus, they've got the ring of truth? Do you not say when he says something you say, Amen, Lord? I'm looking to Christ's cross so that everyone who trusts in him, even in his deep humiliation and apparent defeat, he says, will have eternal life.

Remember how Spurgeon was converted when the other text, look unto me, all you nations, and be saved. And the preacher who had run out of things to say, young man under the balcony, you look rather miserable, why don't you look?

Anybody can look, you could look. And of course, what Spurgeon said is true today, isn't it? You can look in faith to Jesus. Well, this leaves us only two outcomes or two responses.

[45 : 48] And in 19 to 21, Jesus says this is the verdict, actually what he says is this is the crisis, that's the English word for it, this is the crisis, that will do for English, light has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil.

Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fears that their deeds will be exposed, but whoever does the truth comes into the light, that it may be plainly seen that what they have been done has been done in the sight of God.

He says there's two outcomes, this is the crisis really, there is hating the light, or coming to the light, so there's the light, and there were either moths who come to the light, or wood lice who avoid the light, and a Christian is someone who comes to the light, and what will you do today?

Now this is the crisis, in a sense light has been displayed for us, because we've looked at this text, and what's your response? Do you come towards the light, you say yes to all of that, or has it unfortunately pushed you further away, so you say no I don't really want any of that, are you responding like a moth, or a woodlouse, how will you be dealing with this?

How will you be dealing with this? And let's assume this is the first time you've ever come to church, so I don't want to press you into a premature rejection of things, but there's some challenge here isn't there, how are you going to deal with that?

[47 : 20] I just want to urge you to take things further, to have some dealings with God, to say I want to know whether this is true, I want to know how I should respond, I want to know where this leaves me, and if in the light of this I got things wrong about being a Christian, I want them to be

right, even now, I want to be right with you on this, how will you deal with this?

Flesh, remember only flesh gives birth to flesh, it's only spirit that gives birth to spirit, are you going to go away believing the testimony of Jesus, are you going to go away believing it, not because your mum and dad believed it, but because you've heard that Jesus, and you know that what he says is true, and Jesus lifted up on the cross, what do you see?

What was Jesus lifted up on the cross? Do you see a failure? Do you see a tragedy? Do you see an enigma? Or do you see the very best thing that has ever happened to you?

The very best thing that you've ever come across? And as you see the cross, do you see this as an act of unjustified love? Which is what the text says it is.

And if somebody is showing you such unjustified love, will you not respond to it with gratitude? You know, if your little niece or nephew made you an Easter card or something, gave it to you out of love, what would you do?

[48 : 51] Tear it up and throw it away? Smash it down on the floor? What will you do to God who offers you his son? Will you accept that for God so loved the world that he gave his only son?

What sort of response will we give to that? Will we receive it as an act of love with gratitude? And I've tried to explain what being a Christian is and say something about becoming a Christian and I'd like to commend to you there's nothing better than to put your trust in Jesus who died on the cross and become a Christian.

To which I say amen and stop. Thank you.