

PM John 3:1-21 Saving Faith

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[0:00] Well, please turn with me in the scriptures to John chapter 3, the third chapter of John's gospel.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

[1:28] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be? Jesus answered him, Are you not the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and we bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things, and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven, except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

[2:49] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 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.

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.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 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.

Ending our reading there at verse 21. And may the Lord bless this reading to us. Well, please turn with me to this passage that we've just read together from John chapter 3.

[4:12] And I want to focus our attention this evening on one of the great verses in the whole of the Bible, verse 16 of John 3. Well known, I'm sure, to all of us.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

In this verse, we have one of those heavenly things which our Lord Jesus had just spoken of to Nicodemus. We are so thankful to be able to listen in to the conversation and to the teaching which the Lord had with this teacher of Israel.

Listen again as I read out these familiar words. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

This statement is typical of what we find in John's Gospel. Someone once said that John's Gospel is like a mighty ocean in which an infant can paddle and wet their feet and in which an elephant can drown.

[5:42] And in this verse, there's hardly an expression used that a child could not easily explain.

And yet here are truths, doctrines, which would fill volumes written by the wisest theologians. Here we can learn what the philosophers of old could never grasp.

And that is the story of God's dealing with man and the terms on which God offers man his salvation. In this verse we see life and we see death.

Here we see what man deserves and here we see the free grace of God. Here we see what all can expect who go their own way.

And here we also see clearly explained what Jesus refers to later in this Gospel as the way, the truth and the life. Now I want to look at this very familiar verse under five headings.

[6:53] First of all, we shall look at the world and see the true condition of the human race. And then in the second place, we'll look at the love of God spoken of.

And then thirdly, we'll look at the gift of God's only Son. In the fourth place, we'll look at the means by which we receive this wonderful gift.

And then finally, we'll look at the promise, the wonderful promise that is given to all those who believe in the Son. So first then, let's look at the world.

For God so loved the world. What does the Word of God teach us about the world and the condition of the human race?

I believe that the witness of Holy Scripture on this subject is crystal clear. Think of what the Apostle John says in his first letter, chapter 5, verse 19, when he writes, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

[8:08] Our first father, Adam, was indeed created in the image of God. He was pure and sinless as he came from the hand of God at the beginning of creation.

But on the day that he ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, he fell from that high estate. And by that action he disobeyed God's clearly expressed command and he immediately at that moment became a sinful creature.

And now all of us who are descended from him have inherited from Adam a wicked and a sinful and a corrupt nature.

And that sinful nature clings to us from the moment we're born and it shows itself daily in our life and in our actions.

In a word, we learn that from the hour of the fall our human character has been fixed that we are part of this sinful, indeed very sinful world.

[9:23] world. Now I know that this sounds harsh upon ears that have been attuned to the things that the world likes to think and say about the so-called inherent goodness of the human race.

But do you really think, do you really truly think that what I've just said sounds too strong? We need to think clearly about what the scripture says to us about this subject and we need to reflect on our own experience as well in the light of what the scripture teaches us.

And if we seriously look into the scriptures, we will see this teaching demonstrated in the clearest possible terms. If you read through the books of the Old Testament and especially the books that record the history of God's people in the Old Testament, do these records not tell us the sad and depressing story of man's disobedience and man's unbelief in the things related to God?

We read in the sacred pages of scripture about terrifying judgments such as the flood, such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and also about how men disregarded those terrifying judgments.

We read about gracious mercies that God has shown to men and women in Old Testament times, such as the calling and protection of the people of Israel.

[11:09] But we also see, how men soon forgot what God had done in mercy and in grace.

We read of inspired teachers, we read of revelations given through these teachers from heaven, such as the law of Moses, and yet man didn't obey the revelations and the law given in such wonderful manner.

We read also of special warnings, such as the voice of the prophets, and yet we also read about how men did not believe them and respond in repentance to them.

them. Yes, dear friends, if we weigh up what we see in the pages of Old Testament history, we see that we're part of a sinful and rebellious world.

We have hearts that drift away, go away, from the living God. But you might think to yourself, well, okay, what you're saying is true, but what you're saying belongs to the old order of things.

[12 : 26] It belongs to ancient times, man in his infancy, as it were. But we've grown up, we've become wiser, we've evolved into something better than our ancestors.

But I ask you, is the world of today really any better than the world of yesterday? look around you, and you will see convincing proof that sin is abounding as much today as it ever did in the past. Read the news, observe what you see on social media. Do you not see nearly every sin under heaven observed, reported on, paraded in pride before our eyes, sins, especially those sins which are an abomination in the sight of God.

We don't need to dig deep to see sins of sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like this.

Paul's warning to the Galatians is as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago in the days of the Roman Empire. He said, I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[14 : 10] And if such things take place in a land which has been so blessed with so much light and gospel knowledge as our own, how much more should we find them in countries where there has been neither the light of the gospel nor the knowledge of the living and true God?

Do you still entertain doubts about the depravity of fallen human nature? Well, look at yourself in the mirror. do you not see the proof of your fallen sinfulness in your own self?

Search your own heart. Count up the number of evil thoughts and ungodly ideas which pass through your imagination in just one single day.

Now, I'm talking about your secret thoughts which are only known to yourself and to the all seeing God. Add up all of these thoughts and tell me if the total doesn't humble you, doesn't condemn you. Yes, dear friends, whether you admit it or not, we are indeed all part of a sinful and rebellious world.

[15 : 37] It may be a humbling truth, but nevertheless scripture teaches us and our own experience backs up what scripture says.

And therefore the world spoken of here in John 3 16 is a world which lies in the power of the evil one. It's a corrupt world, a world which our maker and preserver might well have left to destruction and in so doing he would have acted with perfect justice, because he has given us laws and they have been broken.

He's given us promises and they have been despised and he's given us warnings and they have not been believed. Such is the world, our world and such is the character and condition of the world. But now secondly, let us see how God has acted towards this sinful and rebellious world. This world that is under condemnation, that is without hope, that is without excuse.

How has God acted towards this world? What can stay, what can hold back the execution of the sentence the world deserves?

[17 : 04] And the answer in this text is the love of God. The love of God. God, says our text, so loved the world.

Oh yes, he might well have poured out on the world and upon us, the bowls of his wrath as he did on the angels who didn't keep their first estate.

but no, he spared us. God so loved the world. Justice demanded our punishment. Holiness required that we should be swept from the face of the earth.

But God so loved the world. Blessed be his name that we were not subject to human justice.

For human justice may not show mercy when a crime is proved beyond reasonable doubt. But praise be to God that we were in the hands of one whose ways are not our ways and whose thoughts are not our thoughts.

[18 : 14] And so we read these wonderful words, God so loved the world. May we not say with the apostles we meditate upon this truth oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

Consider, think about the incomprehensible goodness of the love of God. Is it not the case that many of us in this world remember injuries that we have suffered at the hands of others and our hearts are filled with anger and resentment against the injuries that we've received.

We find it hard to love those who have given us even just some slight tiny bit of an offence. Or if we do say that we love them if truth be told what efforts do we make to promote their well-being and happiness?

Is there not a hardness and coldness and deadness to our hearts when it comes to affection for those who've offended us? But here in John 3 16 we learn that we are not dealt with according to our own ways.

For the Bible tells us here in this marvellous verse that the God of holiness has loved this sinful world which has continually dishonoured and denied him and disobeyed him.

[19 : 55] The psalmist said that God's word was better to him than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Well here in this verse is a word that is more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Let's keep this statement about God's love for the sinful and wicked world always in mind. This word concerning God's love will not let you down when the day of trial comes, when temptation is strong and faith is weak.

Hold on to the truth of God's love for this sinful world. Write this word on your heart and keep it fresh in your memory and you will find it to be a strong source of comfort in times of weakness and illness and especially in the hour of death.

God indeed is love for God so loved the world. Now let us see in the third place how God demonstrated this love towards the world.

world. We all had sinned. Who then could put this sin away? Who could present us clean and pure and spotless before God's throne?

[21 : 23] We had all utterly failed to obey God's holy laws. How then could we be clothed acceptably and enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb on the last great day?

Well look here in John 3 16 and behold the wisdom and the love of God. For this is what the wise men of this world could never grasp or understand.

How can perfect justice and perfect mercy be reconciled? How can God justly justify his sinful creatures and yet be the holy one whose law must always be fulfilled?

All is explained in this simple verse that even a child could understand. He gave his only son. think of the magnitude the scale of this gift. His only son.

[22 : 42] Can anything give you a more perfect idea of the God who is love? Listen again to the expression the apostle uses.

He gave. He gave. not because we had merited anything. He gave as a free gift without cause being found in us.

He gave freely as a free gift. It's not something we deserved. It was all of grace. By grace you are saved, says Paul to the Ephesians.

to the Romans he speaks about the gift of God being eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The gift of God. By grace are you saved.

And for what purpose was his son given? Friends, he was given to atone for our guilt by the sacrifice and death of himself upon the cross.

[23 : 55] He was the Lamb of God. A Lamb without spot, without blemish. And by so doing the Lord Jesus made a full and perfect and sufficient offering and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

And so the Apostle John could write in his first letter these glorious words, if anyone does sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The son described by John here as the righteous, the righteous one, was given in order to bear our iniquities and carry our transgressions upon the accursed tree, the cross.

Being innocent himself, he was for our sakes accounted guilty that we for his sake might be accounted righteous.

[25 : 14] And nor is this all. for he was given to fulfill the demands of that law which we have broken and he did fulfill them perfectly.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that he was tempted in all points as are we yet without sin.

He perfectly fulfilled the law and commandments of God. And so the Lord Jesus brought in an everlasting righteousness which is like a pure white garment which is placed upon and covers all those who believe in him.

For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And that leads us to the fourth point which is how are the benefits of this wonderful gift made over to us? What are the means by which this gift is applied to us?

[26 : 29] how do we receive this remedy for our sinful condition? And the answer the text applies is this we receive God's gift by faith.

Whoever believes whoever believes whoever believes not with the head only remember but with the heart and believing comes to Christ with a confession of his own sin and his own unrighteousness and receives Jesus Christ as his only hope of salvation is saved by faith.

How simple is this way of life that God has ordained. We don't see a sign written over the entrance to the way of life that says whoever has prepared himself by long and continual acts of repentance whoever has begun to lead a new life whoever has done so many good works whoever has attended so many church services whoever has given so much to charity only such as these shall enter and no other.

Now that's not we see over the way into the kingdom of God because such a message would frighten any poor soul who was suffering under a sense of the conviction of sin.

Now the only thing that is required of those who seek entry into eternal life is faith. Faith. Whoever comes to Jesus in simple childlike trust shall never be turned away.

[28 : 47] Hear what the apostle Paul says about this and he's reminding his readers that God is no respecter of persons. He's telling them that there isn't one way for the rich and another for the poor or one way for the educated and another way for the uneducated.

No he teaches this there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same Lord is Lord of all bestowing his riches on all who call upon him for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But remember this also and I have to underscore this or would be unfaithful in preaching the gospel and it's a warning it's a warning to us all there is no other way than the way of faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the world's only saviour. There is no other saviour. There is no other way of salvation.

And that means that God hasn't left it up to each and every one of us to choose our own path to heaven. He has appointed one way one way only no more than one way and no one can enter into life except by going on this single track.

[30 : 42] If you are not firm in faith you will not be firm at all said Isaiah to the unbelieving king Ahaz or as the old version puts it if you will not believe surely you shall not be established or as Jesus said to the Jews of his day who refused to believe in him unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins Jesus said that Jesus said that unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins John chapter 8 verse 24 and these verses teach us this vitally important lesson that though God so loved the world that he gave for it his only son yet the benefits of that gift can never be obtained by those who will not believe

God's giving his only son out of his love for the world will do you no good whatsoever unless you believe you must receive and you must rest upon Christ alone for salvation as he is offered to you in the gospel no receiving no resting upon Jesus means you're lost still in your sins and will perish everlastingly finally in the last place we must think about the promise and the consequence which the text holds forth to those who do believe in Jesus whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life my friends here is a promise that is most perfectly suited to us in our sinful and condemned condition could

God have planned it any better than he did there is nothing you see an unconverted person fears so much as death the most courageous people that we know who would never shrink from any danger and who would rush in to face any difficulty have been known to tremble and to turn pale at the approach of some pain or illness that will lead them down into the grave why should this be the case surely the reason is this their conscience and we all have a conscience that is active to one degree or another but their conscience tells them whether they like to confess it and openly speak about it or not that after death comes the judgment and the conscience tells them that all shall be judged according to their works and their conscience reminds them that they will not be able to endure this divine fiery trial because they know that they have sinned and they know that they did not seek reconciliation during the days of their earthly life and they know and begin to feel that one day they will be assigned a part in the lake which burns with fire and sulfur forever and this is the

reason why the unconverted think death a most unpleasant subject and why they are afraid to think about the last day but friends this word from the gospel of John

John 3 16 this word should be music in the ear of every sinner whoever believes on him shall not perish but have everlasting life look at the details of the promise the believer shall not perish perish this earthly tent this mortal body in which we live may indeed be taken down and laid in the grave and see corruption but friends the true sting of death is sin and this our saviour has taken on himself and put away so we don't need to fear physical death the sting of death is sin but Jesus has drawn out that sting for us who believe the believer shall not perish in the day of judgment the second death can have no power over him hell has no claim upon him and the words of our blessed master shall be found to be true by our experience this is the will of my father he said that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day or the words we so often hear read at funeral services

I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me though he die he shall live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die and more than this we're told here that the believer shall have eternal life he will not perish praise God but he shall have eternal life he shall be raised body and soul at our Lord's second coming he shall dwell forever in that blessed place where death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away eternal life eternal life and now dear friends we've got to judge for ourselves here's a text that contains a vast treasure of precious truths and comforting doctrines can you listen to these things without being moved

[39 : 13] I know they're familiar we've heard them so often but can we listen to these things and not be moved at what God has done in his love and grace in what he has provided for unworthy guilty sinners my friends if this doesn't move you then you may well tremble for the safety of your immortal soul there's something wrong with you you're not saved you don't get it you don't understand but believe in Jesus I would encourage you to take to heart these words of gospel comfort and to frequently think upon them let them always be in your thoughts let them add strength to your faith and growth to your sanctification let them increase your humility and your thankfulness your zeal for

God's glory and your desire to show forth his praise your love towards Christ and your love towards your brothers and sisters for surely if we kept these words in mind surely if God so loved the world this world of great sinners such as you and I it's a small thing it's a tiny thing for us to love our fellow sinners and just one more word for those who perhaps don't really care too much about these things the text has an appeal for you this verse of scripture if there were no other verses of scripture would be sufficient to condemn you in the day of judgment because it leaves you without excuse for staying in your sins you are just like the rest of us you deserve nothing but the wrath and judgment of

God because of your sin and yet look look into this verse God says to you that he is willing to save you look at what he is promising to you if you will only believe in the son that he has freely given remember how great your guilt must be if you hear these words and then reject them and turn your back upon them you are part of the very world that God has so loved for your sake he gave his only son and even now at this minute he is inviting you by me his minister of the gospel to accept the mercy which he freely offers to you be reconciled with him who will one day be the judge of all so my friends

I would say come in the name of Christ come I would do more than that I would plead and beg you to come to the father in the name of Jesus Christ because it's only through him that we have boldness and access with confidence and I would say to you resist the attempts of the world or the flesh or the devil to hold you back from coming to him now resist even your best friend your closest relative if they would discourage you from coming to God don't put it off for a more convenient time than now the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said we are ambassadors for Christ and here's the marvelous thing about that

God making his appeal through us God is speaking he's making his appeal through his ambassador we implore you therefore on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life may God bless his word and give life to your soul amen let us pray our

[44 : 39] God and loving