

No Condemnation!

John 3:16-18

Thought for the Day: We are spiritually born again and forgiven of all our sins when we trust in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. Whoever believes in Him for salvation need never fear the condemnation of God. (John 3:36)

In John 3:1-15, Jesus is having a conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a key member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. The issue they are discussing can be summarized in this way: What must a person do to be spiritually born again, to be cleansed of their sins, and to be assured of a place in the eternal kingdom of God? In verses 14-15, Jesus begins to directly answer this question: "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." In John's Gospel, "lifted up" is a figure of speech that always refers to crucifixion. Jesus is predicting some three to three-and-a-half years before His death that He is going to die by crucifixion. Just like those who looked in faith to the bronze serpent that Moses lifted up on a pole and thereby survived the deadly bite of serpents in the wilderness (Num. 21:4-9), so Jesus will give eternal life to those who look to Him in faith and trust in His sacrifice on the cross for their salvation. "Look and live!"

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

- John 3:16 is the answer to Nicodemus' question, "How can a person be born again?"
 - When a person believes in Jesus Christ to be the Savior of their soul and the Lord of their life, that person is spiritually born again and receives God's gift of eternal life. (John 5:24)
- God, in His great love for the entire world—every person in it—took the initiative to provide for our salvation.
- He gave the very best He had, He paid the highest possible price, in order to provide for our salvation—His only Son, Jesus Christ.
 - God's gift of salvation is free to us, but it cost Him His most precious possession, His only Son.
- Christ's sacrifice on the cross is the supreme demonstration of God's love for us. (Romans 5:8)
- God's offer of salvation is made available to the whole world, but it is effective only for those who believe in Jesus Christ, who put their faith and trust in Him to save them from the penalty of their sins.
- "This offer is made to whoever believes. To 'believe' is more than intellectual agreement that Jesus is God. It means putting our trust and confidence in him that he alone can save us. It is to put Christ in charge of our present plans and eternal destiny. Believing is both trusting his words as reliable and relying on him for the power to change."
"Jesus accepted our punishment and paid the price for our sins so that we would not perish. 'Perish' does not mean physical death, for we all will eventually die. Here it refers to eternity apart from God. Those who believe will receive the alternative, the new life that Jesus bought for us — everlasting life with God." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

- John 3:16 "is one of the best known verses in all the Bible, doubtless because it states the gospel so clearly and simply. It summarizes what the Lord Jesus had been teaching Nicodemus concerning the manner by which the new birth is received. God, we read, so loved the world. The world here includes all mankind. God does not love men's sins or the wicked world system, but He loves people and is not willing that any should perish."
 "The extent of His love is shown by the fact that He gave His only begotten Son. God has no other Son like the Lord Jesus. It was an expression of His infinite love that He would be willing to give His unique Son for a race of rebel sinners. This does *not* mean that everyone is saved. A person must receive what Christ has done for him before God will give him eternal life. Therefore, the words are added, 'that whoever believes in Him should not perish.' There is no need for anyone to perish. A way has been provided by which all might be saved, but a person must acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior. When he does this, he has eternal life as a present possession." (*William MacDonald, p. 1434*)

17 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.

- Jesus did not come to bring condemnation to the world; the world is *already* under condemnation because of sin.
- He came to be *the solution* to our condemnation, to bring us salvation.
- "God is not a harsh, cruel ruler anxious to pour out His anger on mankind. His heart is filled with tenderness toward man, and He has gone to the utmost cost in order to save men. He could have sent **His Son into the world to condemn the world**, but He did **not** do so. On the contrary, He sent Him here to suffer, bleed, and die in order **that the world through Him might be saved**. The work of the Lord Jesus on the cross was of such tremendous value that all sinners everywhere could be saved if they would receive Him." (*MacDonald, p. 1435*)

18 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.

- Condemnation is our "default position." (John 3:36)
 - God's condemnation and wrath is a present reality for everyone that is outside of Jesus Christ.
 - The Good News is, when we trust in Jesus, we are no longer condemned by God; Jesus took our condemnation upon Himself and paid the penalty due to our sins. (Romans 8:1)
- "Now all mankind is divided into two classes: either believers or unbelievers. Our eternal destiny is determined by the attitude we take toward the Son of God. The one who trusts the Savior **is not condemned, but** the one **who does not** trust Him **is condemned already**. The Lord Jesus has finished the work of salvation, and now it is up to each individual to decide whether he will accept Him or reject Him. It is a terrible thing to reject such a gift of love. If a man will not believe on the Lord Jesus, God can do nothing else but condemn him." (*MacDonald, p. 1435*)
- God does not send anyone to hell; people choose to go to hell by rejecting His offer.
- "Believing in His **name** is the same as believing in *Him*. In the Bible, the name stands for the person. If you trust His **name**, you trust Him." (*MacDonald, p. 1435*)