

This Is the Condemnation

Gospel of John

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If you will, turn with me in your Bible to John 3. My text today is from verse 17 down to verse 21. I want to speak with you about "This Is the Condemnation." A lot of people focused on John 3:16, which we considered last time, but you'll notice here in John 3:17, it begins with that little word, "For," just like John 3.16. When you see "For," it's a conclusion and so then you have to find out what the "For" is there for. As we noticed, we considered last time, John 3:16 is part of what comes before, even as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," in verse 16, "For God so loved the world." We saw that word "so" in verse 16 is the same word as in verse 14, "even so." But it begs the question, how did God love the world that would require the lifting up of Christ on that cross. Such is the holiness and justice of God that he could not just pass by sin. It required, "even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

So really John 3:16 answers that question, how is it that God loved the world, and we noticed last time that the word "world" is in the ethnic sense speaking of the Gentiles. That's the way they divided the world back then, Jew or Gentile. If you weren't a Jew, you weren't in the world, they looked down their nose at you. But the declaration here, you have to understand who John is writing here, because in the beginning of this chapter he's writing to Nicodemus. These were folk that believed that Christ, when he came, the Messiah, would actually establish an earthly kingdom, a Jewish kingdom. So for them to hear that God in this manner loved the world, as soon as they heard that word "world," they were knocked back on their heels, "Whoa, wait a minute. That's not the one that we're expecting here. You mean that kingdom is going to include sinners from different tribes, nations, and tongues, and we're all going to be in one kingdom? Perish the thought." That was their thinking and so the declaration there is that this is how he loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. That word "gave" is "lifted him up; paid the sin debt," not only for those that were Jews, and the remnant according to the election of grace, but also Gentiles, that together they should be redeemed by this one, for whom he gave his only begotten Son.

Again, that "whosoever believeth," I like to draw a line there and say it says whosoever. Whosoever is always in connection with equality and this here describes already that Christ did not lay down his life to try to save everybody, but that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. That's pretty distinct. Think about the multitudes in the world that

don't believe on him. Given all of the different religions, how many don't even believe that he's the Son of God? I'll tell you this, that Jewish nation over there doesn't believe it. Go stand on a street corner in Jerusalem and begin to preach Jesus of Nazareth as being the one that God lifted up and paid the sin debt of sinners throughout the world, how long do you think they'll let you preach that he is the Son of God, God in the flesh? Make it plain. They'll come and arrest you because that's not the God they know.

And so, even here, "he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him." To believe in him is a work of grace. To believe in him is a work of the Spirit. Otherwise, none would believe. That's important to see as we get into this next verse in verse 17 but whosoever believeth in him, to whom that grace is given to believe on him, "should not perish but have everlasting life." To have Christ is to have everlasting life. To have that blood applied to our account and that righteousness imputed that he came and worked out is to have eternal life, everlasting life. But there are many that don't have it. And you say, "Well, why? What is the underlying condemnation?" And that's what I want us to look at. What is that condemnation? I know some will quickly say they didn't believe on him, but what is the underlying condemnation to that? Why is it that in light of everything that's declared concerning Christ and his coming and his death, burial and resurrection, ascension on high, why is it that there are still those that do not believe and will never believe left to themselves?

The unbelief of men in no way deterred Christ from coming and accomplishing his work and that's really what verse 17 is about. When you see "For" here, again it's, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world." Again, think ethnically. This is what the Jews sought in the Christ that should come, one that would actually come and destroy physically those enemies. Remember, they were under the empire of Rome at this point. Boy, they hated Rome. And as they listened to our Lord Jesus declare himself to be the Messiah according to all the scriptures, they were waiting for that time when he would act and he would literally destroy those enemies and all that would be left would be the Jewish nation. That's the context here. Now they're surprised again reading this, "Well, wait a minute. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." There again, that word "world," that sinners from the world, from every tribe, nation, and tongue should be saved. That's why he came. It didn't matter whether they were Jew or Gentile, barbarian, or Scythian like Paul said. These that the Jews looked down upon, Christ came to save such wretches as they were.

And let's not get too hasty in blaming the Jews for this thought, because how many times have we thought if I were God, thank God we're not, "Well, I'd wipe that one out. I'd take this one out." I've actually heard people surmise what would it be like to be God for a day? You wouldn't want any one of us being God for a day. You'd probably start with your neighbor and say, "I'm going to go over there and blast him out. I'm going to go in here and take this one out." God's not reacting to sin. If God should mark iniquity, who should stand? The reality is if I'm not condemned along with the world, it's because God purposed that his Son should come to save a wretch like me, and if you can't put yourself in that lot, then you never have known yourself as you are. I know better than anybody out there. We have a lot of things going on that we're seeing it on TV and we're blasting this one. How could they react that way? Boy, I'll tell you, if I were the president or

whatever, this is what I'd do. It's just like, clean house. That's not how God deals with us. I always think there may be an elect among them, that in all the upheaval, the Lord's going to purpose and cross the path with somebody that's going to declare Christ unto death and he's going to draw them and they'll be brought to Christ most certainly because God purposed to save such.

That's why he goes on in verse 18 to say, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." I love how that's put, he's not condemned because God purposed not to condemn such. From eternity, God purposed to save. This is a remnant according to the election of grace. And the way that tense is there, "he that believeth on him is not condemned," is that he never was condemned and never shall be and the proof is that by the Spirit of God, he's brought to believe on this one, even though the rest of the world doesn't. "Who am I that I should believe?" And when the Spirit so graciously draws my heart to Christ, I understand that I'm that vessel of mercy. That's the only thing, vessel of mercy that separated me out from all the rest of the vessels of wrath. And that's why Christ came. He didn't come to condemn the world. The condemnation of men and their sin and women and being left to themselves, that day is coming in the end when God will take all that are not the Lord's and cast them into everlasting hell but he that believeth on him is not condemned.

And notice how this is put, "he that believeth not is condemned already." Somebody that's condemned already, you're not going to be able to take and reason with and logic and, "Here can't you see?" No, they're condemned already for a reason. What is that condemnation? That's why I said, don't just say, "Well, they don't believe so they're condemned." No, they're condemned already "because he hath not believed the name of the only begotten Son of God." That's the fruit of their condemnation.

But verse 19 says, "this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." You want to know the underlying cause of unbelief, it's right there, the darkness of this heart. The depravity of this heart and with that, the hatred. It's not just that they don't believe, they hate this God. Let me put it in a personal sense. We hate this God until it pleased God to reveal Christ in us, to give us an understanding of what his death was all about and how he purposed to save a wretch like me.

"For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light," notice, "neither cometh to the light." Why is it that men and women don't come to the light, come to Christ? Well, they hate the light because it says there, "lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God," wrought of God. And he did and you come.

So here we see this very important portion of scripture. As I said, it's a continuation from what was said before. Who did God send his Son into the world to save? It's clear he came to save and not condemn. Well, it's those that he's purposed to save and how do he accomplish it? Through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, those that are saved. And that's the result and that's the sure salvation of those throughout the world who are brought to trust in him. So there's a divide here, that's what we're seeing. Those that

Christ has saved and those that he hasn't. Those that believe and those that don't. You can just put a column down there. Well, who are those for whom Christ paid the debt? They will be brought to believe on him. Who are those that he's passed by? They'll never believe on him. Such is the condemnation of their heart.

So the first thing to consider here is that this is the condemnation. It's the key phrase here, this is the condemnation in verse 19, that without Christ doing the work from beginning to end, none could or will be saved. That's how desperate this condemnation is. I hear people say all the time, "I think God ought to just leave the choice up to man." Oh no, you don't because left to us, we never would come. We never would believe on him in spite of all of the evidence. It's like arguing with your kids sometimes. You know, you've got all the evidence as to why they ought to see their guiltiness and yet they don't see it. I don't understand why. That's the way sinners are in this world.

It says that God sent not his Son into the world but very clearly right from the beginning, he's making a distinction. People say, "Well, he came into the world to save everybody." Well, that's not what it's saying, and nor did he come into the world to condemn everybody. This goes all the way back into eternity. Sometimes we say, "Well, God could have just condemned us all." Well, not when you consider that from eternity, he'd already purposed to save a people and that's why he gave that people to his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So no, he could not and would not condemn all sinners because there are those in his grace and mercy that he's already purposed to save. There are vessels of mercy and there are vessels of wrath.

So be careful not to contradict the scriptures here. Yes, there are those that shall be condemned and rightly so, but he did not send his Son into the world to condemn the entire world because there were those objects of his grace. It's just like the high priest entering in, had their names written on his breastplate and he could not condemn them. That's really what's being declared here. God did send his Son into the world. He was made, scriptures say, in the likeness of sinful flesh. He wasn't made a sinner but in the likeness of sinners that he came to save he took on flesh. And being made of a woman and made under the law, is the way that Paul wrote it there in Galatians 4:4. That's an example of his great love, that he should love such sinners as we are. But Christ didn't die to make God lovable. It's because he loved, having seen them in his Son and purposed to save them in his Son that Christ came and he identified with the worst of sinners. That's who we are. Thank God he didn't come into this world to condemn the world. I'm part of this world. Had that been the case, then there would be no hope for such a sinner as I am.

Again here this particular word, "not to condemn the world," you have to understand its cultural context. These Jews saw themselves as favored sons of God. In fact, that's how they addressed even the Lord Jesus Christ when he would save a Samaritan woman or a sinner, a lady that come from outside of Israel even and the Lord delivered such. They were upset because this was not the Christ that they were looking for. They wanted one that showed particular favor to them as a people. So for this declaration to be made here, that he didn't come just to save Jewish sinners but he came to save sinners from every tribe, nation, and tongue that he has chosen, that he has purpose to save, and for whom he shed the blood and who will have attained salvation because of his shed blood.

There's no difference, no distinction, not going to be any in glory that are there because they were better thought of by God than others. God's no respecter of persons. So let's be careful when we point the finger at others and wonder and sometimes we may, "Well I don't think God could ever save somebody like that." Well, what about yourself? Ever since the Lord was merciful and gracious to teach me of Christ, I've never wondered about anybody else, how it is he could save anybody else because I know who I am and yet I'm saved because Christ didn't come to condemn such a sinner as I am, but to redeem. And that's true of sinners throughout the earth. All the sinners throughout the earth are called to look upon him. As the gospels declare, there's no distinction of race. Scriptures, people say, "Well I think he died for everybody." Well he died for everybody without distinction but not without exception. If it was without exception, then there would be no condemnation, everybody would be saved. But even that God purposed otherwise, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish. So even God makes a distinction as to who it is he saves. How do you recognize it? They're brought by the Spirit of God to trust in him, rest in him, have no other hope but him, have no other righteousness but him, have no other sacrifice but him.

I've often said to people when they say, "Well I think Christ died for everybody without exception." I say, well just replace that word "died for" because the death of Christ means something. You say he died for, you're saying he reconciled every single person. That's what the word "death" means, to reconcile on God. If you do, then there's no condemnation. That's not what we're reading even here, that there are those that believe and their salvation's in Christ and that there are those that believe not because they are condemned already. That's what the condemnation is. They're walking dead men. They might give a profession of faith, they might even make a decision to follow after Christ but none of that is what saves a sinner. It's wholly in the word of Christ.

So that's the second thing about this condemnation that I would bring out here. This is the condemnation, that Christ being come, yet many believe not. But it's not because man's unbelief is stronger than the person or the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those that preach, "Well he really would like to save you but he can't unless you let him." That's not the Christ of scripture. There's a purpose for which he came, to save some and to condemn others.

I told you that story before about that hospital chaplain. He was going around room to room and he came in on a man that was on his deathbed and so he began to talk to the man and say to him, "God loves you. If you'll just turn your life over to Jesus right now, he'll save you and you'll be as sure of heaven as your own name." And so the man said, "No, that's not a thing I'm interested in. I don't believe in any kind of Jesus or whatever." So the chaplain said to him, he said, "Well, if that's the case, then he's going to have to condemn you." And the man responded, "The chaplain said, no, he won't." Paul, the chaplain. He said, "Why do you say that?" He said, "Well, you just told me that the choice is mine and that if I choose not to believe him, he's going to condemn me but I would say no, that if I have the power not to believe on him, and thereby he can't save me when it comes to that judgment day, I'm going to tell him the same thing, he can't condemn me either." Such is the thought of such a blasphemous, so-called free will, that

if men can choose themselves whether they're going to be saved or condemned, that puts Christ in man's hands. That's not the case here. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world. These Jews were thinking that if they're a Gentile, then there's no hope. That's not what the message of scripture is. He says there in verse 17 that the world through him might be saved, should be saved. What world? That world of sinners for whom Christ came and those that the Father had given him.

This is the condemnation, then, that Christ being come, many believe not and the reason is they're condemned already. He that believeth on him is not condemned. You have to understand this in the whole context of salvation as set forth in scripture. There are those that God has purposed to save, professes a mercy, and others that he has purposed for condemnation. This is where people get their back, "Who is God to determine who's going to be saved and who isn't?" Well that's that condemnation that's already in the heart that you would even question God, or think that in any way you merit salvation.

He that believeth on him is not condemned. Don't put the cart before the horse here. The reason one believes on him is because he is not condemned. He is not of those that God has purposed for condemnation. Even though being born in this world they're in darkness, yet because they're not condemned, in other words Christ has already paid their sin debts, every one for whom he paid the debt he must have. That's what he himself declared of all that the Father gave him, he should lose none.

So in God's purpose they're not condemned, but also by Christ's work at the cross they're not condemned, and therefore in time the Spirit draws them. That's the only reason I can say that I'm the Lord's. He did not purpose me for that condemnation but that the Lord Jesus Christ should bear that condemnation. If you look over in John 5:24 it says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word," and he's talking here about the spiritual here, by the Spirit of God. And what? "Believeth on him." How can you tell one is truly believed on Christ? Well, they've been made to hear, their ears have been opened to hear of Christ. "And believeth on him that sent me," notice it doesn't say shall have everlasting life, does it? It says "have everlasting life." That's why they believe because that everlasting life is in the very word of Christ that he causes them to hear and believe. And notice, "shall not come into condemnation." Why? "But is passed already from death unto life." That word "passed from" is in the tense that at some point they pass from condemnation to life.

A lot of people like to point to the moment of conversion but I believe when Christ died, paid the sin debt, that's when all those for whom God sent his Son into this world to save, they pass from death unto life because they were never purposed for condemnation. That's why in verse 18 it's clear in that context, he, John 3, "he that believeth on him is not condemned." He never was because God has, in his mercy and grace, put the charge of their sin, even their unbelief. You hear people say, "Well he died for every sin except for unbelief." Well, then we're all in trouble.

Now the contrast is again, this is the condemnation that Christ being come, yet many don't believe. I'm not ignorant to the point of thinking that if I can just reason enough, preach clear enough, and plain enough, that somehow everybody's going to believe in

him. That's not how God has purposed it. He has purposed that salvation to those that he has purposed to save but again, what is the underlying cause of the condemnation? Well, it's that they're condemned already. It's not that they're in a state of ignorance or innocence and somehow now they're going to come to Christ.

When you stop and think about it, the trial was over when Adam fell. People act today like the trial is still ongoing and say I've got to somehow convince them. That over. In that sense, he that believeth is not as condemned already. That's where the root is, it's in our fall in Adam. So that's why they don't believe. That's why given a trillion years some people say, "Well, God's just waiting to give men an opportunity to repent," as if somehow it's up to them. No, if they believe not, it's that they are condemned already. The only one that ever overcame that curse of Adam was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and taken upon himself the sin of that fallen race that the Father had given him in Adam. Therefore, there's now no condemnation, Paul writes in Romans 8, but all others? It's not that they're still teetering between salvation and condemnation. No, here it's clear. He that believeth not is condemned already and that condemnation is just.

One that is condemned already never will, no matter how much... think about the Pharisees and religious leaders that saw Christ, saw his miracles, heard his word and yet did not believe. How great is the condemnation? You say, why didn't they believe? Because their eyes weren't open. It was not appointed that they should believe. And the result then, there in verse 18, is because he hath not believed. You can't blame God. A lot of people try and say, "Well, he didn't purpose me for salvation and I can't believe then I'm somehow not accountable." No. Verse 18 swings it back around, "is condemned already," and the evidence is, "he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." That's the evidence but the condemnation is being left to the darkness of the heart and how great is that darkness?

But thirdly, here coming down to verse 19, "this is the condemnation." It's describing what is this condemnation. Here in verse 19 it says, "that men love darkness rather than light." Such is our nature. No matter how much light is shone, I've said this before, you can take a blind person and get them right up to the light but they're not going to see it. But the reason is here in verse 19, the condemnation is that light has come into the world but what? Men love darkness rather than light. That's an important thing. They prefer to hate God and to hate a Christ in whose hands is salvation, and that apart from his work of grace, none will be saved. They hate that sort of God and Christ. Dealing with a world of God haters, Christ haters. They like their Jesus and they prefer to speak of him as the one that is at their beck and call but that's not the Christ of Scripture. That's how you know that a sinner is condemned, that the light has come into the world, he's the light, but they will not come to him that they might have life but because they love darkness rather than light because of their nature.

That's what's true of everybody meeting in these congregations. They call themselves Christians and, you know, it's based upon their own choice. They're like Cain. It's Cain's religion. They're still bringing fruit, the works of their own hands, and even as God rejected Cain and his offering, so these demonstrate God's rejection. But they love it. They don't want a Christ to save them. They want to have a part of it. They want to be co-

partners. Contribute something. Be able to say that they did something. But that just demonstrates their condemnation all the more.

Verse 20, when it says there, "every one that doeth evil hateth the light." What is it to do evil? Well, it's to come in another way than what Christ has declared and to insist on it. It's like the Lord with Cain. Remember, he said, "Do that which is right otherwise sin lies at the door." Well, what was it that he was to do? Go get a sacrifice, a blood sacrifice. But men won't do that. They'll have a Christ that did part of it but now their part is contributed and so together, we're going to achieve salvation. It's not that way. Here it describes "every one that doeth evil hateth the light." People that reason that way, that's what it is to do evil, to think that in any sense, in any way my will or my works contributed some way to my salvation. That's to do evil and that's to hate the light.

I have people tell me all the time, "You know, I don't hate God." You don't hate your God. You don't hate how you perceive him. But I'll tell you, when you begin to declare salvation by a sovereign God, saving whom he will and then apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that even for those that God the Father gave him, that you'll never be saved, boy, you find the hatred come out. I've had people tell me, "Well, that's not my God." Well, clearly it's not. But how many gods are there? There's only one. There's one God and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus. Apart from that, by not coming in that way, you demonstrate your hatred for God, you demonstrate your blindness in what is clearly evidenced in the light, and you demonstrate your condemnation. And then if God should leave you there, your condemnation would be just. That's the realization that the Lord brought me to as I wrestled as he began to teach me of Christ and who he is, where was salvation. I'm thinking myself already to be saved based upon my profession. The Lord laid me low, caused me to see that every reaction against what God was declaring in his word was really nothing more than hatred and idolatry. Loving myself, that's what idolatry is. Love your own way, love yourself, rather than Christ.

So, clearly if men persist in that false way, the reason is given here that they love darkness rather than light. They love their efforts at attaining salvation versus bowing to what God has declared concerning the Son, that it's in the finished work of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the conclusion here is that this is the condemnation, that natural sinners hate Christ and will continue to do so and will not come left to that condemnation. People like to argue, "Well, is it that they cannot come or they will not come?" Yes. They cannot come because they will not come, and they will not come because they cannot come. It takes the work of the grace of God by his Spirit to draw, convert this otherwise hateful heart to this Lord Jesus Christ and bring us to bow to him and rejoice in him.

So, no matter how great the condemnation, I'm thankful that the Lord has purposed that a remnant should be saved. That's what we read about here in verse 21. Thank God there are those that do the truth. It says, "he that doeth truth cometh to the light." What is it to do truth? Well, it's to bow to the truth as it is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's to bow, it's not to pick up and never attempt to follow Christ. No, to do the truth is to bow to him as a guilty sinner and, if you will, like they used to do in the day when they vanquished an enemy,

with Christ's very foot on the neck of that sinner. That sinner has no hope but Christ should show mercy.

That's what it is to do the truth and it's manifest in coming to Christ. You see that they go together, "he that doeth the truth cometh to the light." I'm not doing works, but I'm doing what the truth declares and that is bowing to the Lord Jesus Christ and looking to his finished work alone. That takes eyes to see. Thank God there is that remnant that he so purposed should come to the light and own who we are, you see in the last part of verse 21, "that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." The light manifests the deeds but if I do come to the light and I do see him and I do bow to him and I do believe on him, don't overlook the last part of verse 21, it's made manifest that they are wrought in God, by God. God be the glory for the great things he hath done. It says so loved he the world that he gave us his Son. How has he loved the world? Well, he gave his Son for those sinners. He has purposed to save who never were ordained to condemnation and therefore their salvation is in him. I'm thankful it's in his name, aren't you? Not in mine. Whom he saves, he keeps. Oh, what a glory.