

He Who Believes
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John 3:36
September 4th, 2011

...to the third Chapter of John. We're going to focus our thoughts on Verse 36 this morning, the last Verse of the third Chapter. I want to make a few additional announcements or call your attention to some that are in the bulletin that I think we need to highlight. I agreed that I would do this at the beginning of my sermon. So the first thing relates to our teaching ministry at the church. Wednesday night, we're beginning a new Bible study, and it's a challenge for me, because what we're going to try to do is go through the Bible at about 1 week per book of the Bible, which is a little bit different than our normal Sunday morning pace. And the idea is to get an overview, to try to get sort of a map of Scripture, the Bible at 30,000 feet, so to speak, and see if we can get the forest so that it helps us to put the trees into proper context. So that's going to begin on Wednesday night. Of course, we'll have a new schedule as Ted mentioned, starting 6:45 the Bible study and then prayer at 7:30.

Then we also have a new Sunday morning Bible study starting next Sunday morning, and we have two new classes: *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, taught by Todd Guthrie, and *Biblical Parenting*, taught by Ted Guthrie. We had some wonderful Sunday morning Bible studies through the summer on counseling, and I appreciate Jack Genner and others that have ministered through the summer, and now we're looking forward to some new classes. So you'll want to be here next Sunday morning for those, and pray for those who are preparing.

Then we have a men's Bible study, and starting on this coming Saturday will be the first Saturday, and then the following Tuesday, not this Tuesday but the following Tuesday the 13th will be the first Tuesday morning study, and the study is going to be covering the marvelous book by J. I. Packer – *Knowing God*, and we have had a wonderful time the last few years, actually eight years in a row, we've had men's Bible studies on Saturday morning. It's been a tremendous part of what the Lord has used to bless me, and I think to bless our church, and so I hope you'll plan to attend. It will be from 7:30 to 9:00, and there's some good time of fellowship, and sharing, and prayer that we take part in each week as well.

Now, our Ladies Bible Studies are also beginning. A week from Tuesday, on September 13th, we have a study on First Peter, which is taught by Barbara Enter, which will begin that day, and then there will be an evening study forthcoming. A

week or two after that, we'll start an evening study. Details are still being worked out, so more to come on that. But the Lord said Himself, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," and so I hope you'll take advantage of these opportunities to be in God's word with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

We've been looking at John 3:31-36 the last three Sundays counting today, and we want to look particularly today at Verse 36, along with a couple of things that we haven't really looked at that closely in the preceding passage. We've asked a question when we introduced the larger passage, John 3:22-36, which is really John the Baptist's last words in the Gospels. They are his last words in the Gospel of John certainly, and his last witness to Christ. These 15 verses contain John's last words. As we've been looking at the entire passage, we've asked the question: How do you recognize a faithful Gospel ministry? What characterizes faithful Gospel ministry, whether it's a preaching ministry, or teaching ministry, or a counseling ministry, or it's just discipling or parenting? What is it that really essentially characterizes faithful Gospel ministry? How do you recognize it?

We've seen in this passage that John the Baptist is a model to emulate, that he provides us an example to follow, and we saw as we looked at this, that first we broke this down under the character of faithful Gospel ministry, Verses 22 to 30, which really is summed up in John the Baptist's words, "He must increase. I must decrease." That's the essential character of faithful Gospel ministry, the desire that Christ might have the preeminence. And then we said: What's the content of faithful Gospel ministry? And we spent the last two Sundays unpacking Verses 31 to 35 to look at what John, when you distil down his ministry, what was it he said? What was it he taught? What was his content?

His content was the supremacy of Jesus Christ. He lifted up the glory of His Savior. That was what he preached. He preached not himself but Christ, and so we saw the four aspects of the supremacy of Christ that are lifted up in these last words of John the Baptist recorded here in the Gospel of John the apostle: The supremacy of his person, that Jesus is from above. The supremacy of His word, that He speaks the very words of God. Other people speak from the earth. Even the great apostles and prophets, there's a sense in which Jesus' word transcends even theirs, though ultimately their word is the word of God, the Living Word of God. Here, John the Baptist puts great distance between everyone else and Jesus, the supremacy of His word. Last time we saw His anointing. The Holy Spirit was upon Him in a way no man has ever had the Spirit. That's the supremacy of His relationship.

So, all these things point to Jesus Christ and His preeminence. That's the message. Well, that's the character and the content of faithful Gospel ministry, and today what we're going to look at in Verse 36 is: *The Call of Faithful Gospel Ministry*, or possibly "The Claim" if you want to pick another word. I've gone back and forth. You don't just present who Christ is, but you also make a claim or you issue a call for a response, and that's what John does in Verse 36. In his very last words recorded by the apostle John in Verse 36, he says this:

John 3:36 ~ He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

That's the call of faithful Gospel ministry. Let's pray together right now...

Our Father, we bow before You always aware that we need Your grace. We need Your Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts, to help us to see, and to understand, and to obey Your truth, to see more clearly the glory of Your Son. That's our desire. We pray in His Name, Amen.

So let's look at the call of faithful Gospel ministry. What do you do in response to the supremacy of Christ? The content of our ministry should always be to talk about Jesus, to lift up Jesus, to present Jesus Christ. That's our message, but every time, there is an implicit claim on someone. The Gospel is not just a message that informs the mind. It also is an invitation that calls the heart. So it's not just information but it's an invitation. John says, "What do you do with Jesus Christ? Now that I've presented Him, what are you going to do with Jesus Christ?" That is the issue, and faithful Gospel ministry needs to be clear about that as we share with unbelievers.

I want us to organize our thoughts this morning under three headings, three points, as we unpack this Verse 36. The first is *A Clear Call*, that if we're going to be faithful in Gospel ministry, we need to issue a clear call. The second point is *A Solemn Warning*. With a clear call, the other side of the coin in the clear call to faith is a solemn warning. Then when you issue that, the third point is *A Proper Perspective*. We need to have a proper perspective as we make known the Gospel and issue the call of the Gospel. John the Baptist helps us to see those things in these verses.

1) A Clear Call:

We said Verse 36 represents the final word of John the Baptist in this Gospel of John. Now, it's significant that John the apostle, the author of this book, gives so much time to John the Baptist. It certainly makes a lot of sense, but when you think about it in some of the natural ways the Lord works, His sovereignty extending over every detail of our lives, if you remember when we were looking at Chapter 1, we noticed that when we're introduced to John, remember when John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," and two of his disciples left him and went and followed Jesus? We saw that one of those disciples name was given – Andrew. Andrew went immediately and got Peter, but the other disciple who followed Jesus from John was not named, which makes most Bible scholars and theologians strongly convicted that the other disciple was John the apostle himself, because he has only not wanted to mention one person's name in book, and that's himself. He never speaks of himself as John the apostle, and he doesn't say me or my. He says, "The apostle whom Jesus loved," later. He refers to himself over and over again, and he didn't name himself.

He didn't say, "Andrew and Timmy left following John the Baptist." I don't know why I said Timmy, but anyway. He didn't say, "Andrew and whoever left..." He said, "Andrew and the other disciple," and so I bring that up to say John the Baptist was very important to John the apostle. He had great love and affection for John the Baptist. He was the one who first opened his eyes, by God's grace was used to open his eyes to Christ. It was his testimony, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" It was his ministry of the word, his pouring out of his heart through those months when John the apostle followed him, that prepared his heart and tilled the soul of his heart to see the glory of Christ.

So he wants John the Baptist's testimony to shine, and you find in his Gospel the most clear and the most detailed exposition of John the Baptist in all of Scripture, he sets before him. And think back also on remember the basic looking at the forest rather than the trees, you think of the argument and the structure of the whole Gospel of John the apostle, at how does he organize his Gospel? We noted that basically his purpose is stated really clearly in John 20:31, where he says, "Listen, Jesus did many things, and said many things, and if they were all recorded, there would not be books to hold them, but these things, the things that I've written, are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that believing, you may have life in His Name." What he's saying is, "Listen, I've carefully worked through all of the things (and the Spirit of God inspiring him to do it exactly this way), but I've carefully worked through, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, put together this account of the life and the

ministry of Jesus. With this view in mind, I want to convince you, the reader, to believe.”

We’ve seen that a key word in the book is the word witness, or testimony, or testify. The Greek word μαρτυρέω (martyreō), the verb we get our English word martyr from. A martyr, a person who dies for their faith, is actually a witness, according to the Scripture. They’re witnessing with their blood. But the idea is of witnessing, testifying to the glory of God, that John has organized his Gospel in such a way that he’s offering a series of testimonies to the Person of Jesus Christ. He has organized his whole book, really, in a way you can look at it as a legal argument. It’s not really a legal argument. It’s a Spiritual argument. But think about Verses 1-18 are like the opening statement, and when you look at Chapter 1, after the opening statement where he talks about the glory of Christ and he’s basically saying, “This is who I’m going to show you. He is the Word. He is the One who was from the beginning, this man Jesus,” then in Verse 19 he says:

John 1:19 ~ This is the testimony of John,...

You see, he’s calling up a witness. This is the testimony of John the Baptist. He’d actually given us a little bit of word of that in Verses 6-8:

John 1:6 ~ There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness (martyreō), to testify (martyreō) about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify (martyreō) about the Light.

It’s a legal oath, a solemn swearing to what you know to be true. He called John the Baptist to the stand, in a sense, John the apostle does. That’s what he does particularly in Verse 19 as he starts to let him speak, and we see John the Baptist giving his testimony. “I am not the Christ,” he says in Verse 20. “No, I’m not the Prophet. I’m not Elijah. I am one sent before Him.”

John 1:23 ~ He said, ‘I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.’

John 1:29 ~ The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ 31 I did not recognize Him, but so

that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” 32 John testified...

Do you see that again? He testified, saying:

John 1:32 ~ John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

Look at Verse 34. Here is the climax of his first time on the witness stand, as it were:

John 1:34 ~ I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

“Okay, John the Baptist, you step down for a minute,” and then he starts and he tells us about the other disciples, Andrew and the other disciple of John who follow after Jesus, and Andrew goes to Simon Peter and says, “We found the Messiah.” You have him testifying. You see a brief testimony with Andrew. One question: Who’s Jesus? “He’s the Messiah.” Simon Peter goes to him and Simon Peter says, “You’re the Messiah.” Then Philip encounters Him and goes to Nathaniel and says, “We found the One about whom Moses wrote in the Law and the Prophets – even Jesus from Nazareth.” You see, there’s Philip on the witness stand. Then Nathaniel says, “No way, He can’t be from Nazareth. Nothing good comes from Nazareth,” and then he goes and meets Jesus, and in one brief encounter, you have him going from skeptic to believer, and he says, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.”

So you have testimony, testimony, testimony, and then you come back to John the Baptist again in Chapter 3:27-36, and there’s more testimony. The supremacy of Christ, he starts laying it out and his testimony comes to a climax in Verse 36, where he says, “Now, in a sense, John the Baptist has even presented his case. I’ve born witness, and I’m calling you to make a verdict, to issue a verdict. Will you believe or not?” And the apostle’s doing the same thing. The author of the book has John the Baptist among all those others, and the rest of the book is just filled with eyewitness accounts. When you read the book, look for those quotation marks. You’re going to find a Samaritan woman testifying. You’re going to find a man who was born blind, testifying when he’s saved. “All I know is I was blind and now I see.” Testimony, testimony, testimony, climaxing with the testimony of doubting Thomas, who when he sees Jesus the risen Christ, and Jesus in His kindness and tenderness says, “Thomas, reach here your hand into My side.

Behold, the scars in My hands and My feet, and be no longer unbelieving and unbelieving,” what does Thomas in his own words say? “My Lord and my God!”

So John the apostle presents witness after witness after witness, and he also presents seven signs which are like material evidence. The book is organized around seven signs. We read in Chapter two, “This is the first sign that Jesus did.” That was when He changed the water into wine. The word *sign*, the Greek word, means an authenticating token, something that certifies something’s validity, and he gives seven of those. That’s the perfect number. We’ve talked about numbers when we were looking at Daniel. We read earlier from Daniel, and when we preached through Daniel, we saw the importance of numbers in the Scriptures. Seven is the number of perfect. You have seven signs, and you also have Jesus Himself as the star witness. John the Baptist is the second most important witness in this book, but the Person who has the most important testimony is Jesus Himself. It’s His testimony. It’s what He testifies.

John the apostle organizes his Gospel in such a way that you have seven major sayings of Jesus, seven major discourses of Jesus, and you have seven *I AM* sayings of Jesus. “I am the Bread of Life. I am the Light of the world. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the door of the sheepfold. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Before Abraham was, I AM.” The way this book is presented is the avalanche of evidence just grows, and grows, and grows, so that anyone who is open-minded, who looks at this, is overwhelmed with the weight of evidence and must render the verdict. But you can’t just enjoy the weight of the evidence. It’s not just here to inform the mind. No, the revelation of the Person and work of Christ makes a claim on your soul. Will you believe? That’s the issue, and we see that that’s a part of faithful Gospel ministry in the ministry of John the Baptist.

Back to our passage. In Verse 36, he’s calling for a clear response. He’s saying, “You must decide. Are you going to believe? There are two ways to respond. Either you will believe in the Son and have life, or you will not obey the Son and not see life. There are just two options. There’s no middle ground. And when the weight of who Christ is comes upon you, it is incumbent upon you to respond in faith.” The Lord is gracious, and for many, He gives many opportunities, but some He only gives one, and when you have heard, the urgency of the Gospel is don’t delay. Today is the day of salvation, respond to Him in faith. So we’re to issue a clear call.

You see this throughout the New Testament. When Peter preaches, he lifts up the glory of Christ. Now, today I say this because in Reformed circles in which we are a part, sometimes we neglect the clear call. Now, most evangelicalism is really good at the clear call. They're too good at it, actually. All they do is call for a decision, call for a decision, call for a decision. I've been in services myself where the invitation went on so long that by the time it's done, what were we even invited to do? Or some preaching is just all about the decision and nothing about Christ. That's not New Testament Gospel preaching. New Testament Gospel preaching as we have seen the content is the glory and the extravagant wonder of what Christ has done. That's the content.

Now, in light of that, there's a claim. But the weight and the emphasis is on the content of the Gospel, which is Jesus Christ. But we have to watch out in Reformed circles. Sometimes we can forget to make the claim, and sometimes people de-emphasize that. They let their theology stray from the Scripture. The Bible makes clear you make a call for faith. You make a call for repentance. You issue the call. The apostle Peter, after he lifted up the glory of Christ in Acts 2, when he had talked about how the Father has raised Jesus from the dead and made Him both Lord and Christ, the people were pierced to their hearts. They said, "What must we do?" He said, "Repent and be baptized." The apostle Paul, in Acts 16:31, when he and Silas are praising God in the Philippian jail, and the doors open, the Philippian jailer says, "What must I do to be saved?" He says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." There must be a response of faith as we see throughout the Scripture to trust. So we must call people to Christ, and then we must call them to life. He says, "Who who believes in the Son has eternal life." It has to be part of our message. Jesus Christ gives life. If you come to know Christ, you come to have eternal life. That's the reward. That's the blessedness of knowing Christ. To know God is to live. Jesus Himself said in John 17:2, "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the Lord God and Jesus Christ whom You've sent." The Only true God. John, in his letter in 1 John 5:12, says, "He who has the Son has life."

John 1:4 ~ In Him was life...

That's life itself, and we're all alive physically, but Spiritual life, real life, is in Christ, and you and I were created for that spiritual life. We yearn for that. We long for that. Everybody in the whole face of the universe that's ever lived, has longed for that. They've longed to live. The problem is they sought that by running away from God, and we used to do that too. But if you don't know Christ, you will

not know life. And to have Christ, since in Him is life, is to have life. That's the clear call.

2) A Solemn Warning:

There's a place in our ministries to issue the warning of the Gospel. ***He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*** A part of faithful Gospel ministry is being willing to deal with the bad news. One of the problems I think today is so prevalent is people don't deal with the bad news, and they don't talk about the wrath of God. They don't talk about hell. They say things like, "Well, people today just aren't into that." I don't think people in any day have ever been into that. It really doesn't matter what we're into anyway. I mean, it's clear Jesus talked about hell more than He talked about Heaven. The urgency of judgment is awaiting, and that's pressed on us. When we're faithful and we look at the Scriptures, we see that there are solemn warnings. Eternity is very near. None of us knows how much longer we have in this life, and so we are, as we preach the Gospel, to be aware that a warning must accompany it. You're not able to always get through the whole message when you're talking to somebody, but if you're able to, you want to make sure that the warning is a part of it. "It's a wonderful invitation. If you come to Christ, you have life. He will save you. It's good news I'm bringing, but..." We have to frame it with the alternative. "...but if you do not believe, the one who does not obey the Son..."

Actually, this word translated *obey the Son* is an interesting word. It really means to not be persuaded. Literally, the word is a word which means in the positive, to be persuaded, to be convinced, but here you have an alpha privative before the word, so it negates it. It means to be "unpersuadable", to be invincible. "I will not believe," is the idea, but it's in the fact of such overwhelming evidence. And this is the reality. The reality of the Bible and the truth of God's word is the more that you see of His word, the more you see that it makes perfect sense. Isn't it true that if you have come to be a follower of Jesus Christ, wasn't there a time when you thought that faith and reason were not friends? That's basically the way people talk today. "Oh, that's faith. Science is over here, and faith is over there." It's as if faith really doesn't make sense. It's not supposed to make sense. Well, the reality is when you come to know Christ, and the more you see of His word, and the more you study His word, the more you see that it makes perfect sense. It's the only thing that makes sense. Everything else is absolute and utter irrationality. The Bible fits together with reality.

Francis Schaeffer used a great illustration when he would witness to people. He said, "Imagine that you had a book and the book was the revelation of who we are, from God, and you tore it in half. Everybody has natural revelation." He said that's the bottom half of the book. Imagine you had a book that had been torn in half and you only had the bottom half. You could read and make some sense out of that book, right? You could say, "Well, here are some characters. I see them on this other page over here," but you'd be missing out on quite a bit. Well, Schaeffer said that basically all the religions of the world are like attempts to provide the top half of the book, because everybody has essentially the same bottom half. But all the religions of the world are attempts to put the top half together, and the reality is that when you analyze any of the other religions of the world carefully, what you find out is they don't make sense. But when you take the Bible, and when you are granted by God the grace of faith, and you start seeing, your eyes are opened. All you have to do is have open eyes, and you look at it, and it fits perfectly. The more you study it, the more convinced you become. It's perfect truth. It's the only reasonable thing.

The evidence for Jesus Christ is that way. It's so compelling. The evidence for 6-day creation is so compelling and becoming more so every day. It's just that out there, unbelievers don't want to believe, and so they trump it, and in the world system, controlled by the god of this age who has blinded the eyes of unbelievers, the message out there is that the Bible doesn't make sense and that the Bible isn't true. It's like a refrain. It's like the elevator music that you get when you're on an elevator and you don't think about it, but it's out there constantly playing. It's worse than that. That's what we have in the world in the message of unbelief. Unbelief is constantly out there. We have to get our minds right, and when you get back in the Scripture, and you see how wonderful the beauty of God's truth is, it makes so much sense. It's the truth. It's the way of life, and we have to issue the call to life, but also the warning that if you don't believe this, you will not see life.

The idea is he doesn't say you're going to experience death, which is clearly what's meant. You're going to experience eternal death, separation from God, eternity in hell, but he emphasizes the opportunity by saying, "...not see life." Do you see that? In other places, the Bible says the wages of sin is death. You know, "Hellfire is reserved for you. You're storing up wrath for yourselves." We're going to get to wrath in a minute, but he starts off with, "If you don't obey the Son, if you don't believe the Son, if you're not convinced by the weight of who the Son is, you will not see life." The picture is that life's right before you, and as you're preaching to someone, as you're sharing the Gospel with someone, you realize that life is right before them. It's right in their grasp, and if they don't believe, there

will come a time when it will be no longer available and they will not see it. They will not know it. Not only will they not know or see life, not only will the possibility of life be forever removed, but the wrath of God will remain on them, or abide on them. The wrath of God abides on him, the one who does not obey the Son, who does not believe the Son, who is not convinced of who Jesus is.

The wrath of God is God's settled opposition to evil, His determination to punish everything that is not according to His will. The wrath of God is a part of His glorious nature. It's a frightening thing to us, and it's one of those things that you start looking at, and it's overwhelming, but the reality is it's a part of His glory and His beauty, and the wonder of who He is. If our God was not a God of wrath, what a terrible world it would be. I mean, what if we lived in a world where people committed atrocities and they were never brought to justice? Serial killers went around and there was nobody going after them trying to stop them? How would you like to live in the world like that? That's what it would be like to live in a universe where the wrath of God was not in operation.

The word wrath, ὀργή (orgē), come from the word ὀρέγω (oregō), which means to stretch out, and the idea of pursuing, chasing after evil to capture it and to punish it, to bring it to justice. God's wrath is His determination to punish evil, and the reality is you and I are all in ourselves, according to Scripture, we are evil and worthy of His wrath, because we have not obeyed Him. We have lived for ourselves. We have not glorified and honored Him. We should have loved Him with all of our minds, all of our hearts, all of our souls. That was what was incumbent upon us. Just being His creatures, we should do that. He's given us everything that we ever need, and yet we not only have rejected Him, but we've continually rejected Him, and what He's saying here in this passage is that all people around the world, they have God speaking to them, and they're rejecting His truth, and so the wrath of God is on them. But when someone comes to see the revelation of the Son, when the revelation of Jesus Christ is presented before someone's eyes and they reject that, the wrath of God even more rests on them, and that's a solemn thing, that hell will be worse for people who have heard the name of Christ. Hell will be more intense suffering for those who have proclaimed the name of Christ and yet have not obeyed the name of Christ.

That's why Jesus said some frightening things in the Gospel. You remember when He says, "Woe to you Chorazin. Woe to you Bethsaida." Those were places where He had ministered and done miracles, and people weren't believing there, so He says, "Woe to you, Chorazin," which is a pronouncement of wrath. "Woe to you, Bethsaida." Why? Because if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre

and Sidon, they would have repented long ago. It'll be worse for you in the Day of Judgment than for those Godless people in Tyre and Sidon." He says the same thing about Capernaum. "Woe to you, Capernaum. It'll be better for those in Sodom and Gomorrah than for you, because if the miracles that have been performed in you had been performed in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago." So the weight of revelation is a solemn thing. It's a solemn warning, and so when we present Christ to people, we need to be aware of that. We're presenting Christ because Christ is life. He's the answer. They already have the wrath of God on them, but they need to see the day is short. Don't deny the glory of the Son. So it is a solemn warning.

3) A Proper Perspective:

We've looked at a clear call, a solemn warning, and now a proper perspective. Here we have to put this verse, Verse 36, which really contains the clear call and the solemn warning, we have to put it in context of what John the Baptist has just been saying, and when we do, it gives us proper perspective which we need to have as we share the Gospel. This is where we often go astray, because what John has basically been saying in the verses previous to this is the supremacy of Jesus Christ is so great. He is such a marvelous Person. He has done such tremendous work that if anyone considers Him, how can they not believe? He's One who is uniquely loved by the Father, we saw, One who is supremely anointed with the Spirit, empowered to do works, that if you just look at Him closely, if you look at Him honestly, you will see that He is the Son of God, that He is the One Savior of all mankind. If you see that, how can you not bow before Him?

Now, a proper perspective. I think one of the things we struggle with is I mentioned earlier how the messages of the world get into our thinking, and one of the things that we can often stop and think or have in the back of our minds, and sometimes we voice it and sometimes it's just a doubt that we have – have you ever thought, "Why doesn't God do more to make Himself clear?" I mean, you hear people say stuff like that. If you listen to people talk on the news, or if they talk about spiritual things, they say, "Why does God let this happen? It's wrong of God to let this happen. Why isn't God more clear? If God really wants to save people, why hasn't He made Himself known?" That's what people say, and that's what we hear, over, and over, and over, and we start to imbibe that. We start to believe that somewhere in our hearts and we harbor doubts. Even those who believe and love Christ wonder, "Has God done enough?" in certain situations.

A proper perspective of this passage, when you understand the rest of the Scripture, is that there's nothing lacking in what God has done. It's like we've got things 180 degrees out of phase, and that's not even worthy. It's farther than that. God has been lavish in His generosity in revealing Himself. He has been extravagant. Somebody could say, "I wish He'd write it in the sky." Do you know what you need to say to that? He already has. Psalm 19:1-3 tells us that the heavens are declaring the glory of God. The firmaments (speaking of the heavens itself, the sky around us) speaks forth His praise. Day after day they pour forth knowledge. Night after night they utter speech. Verse 4 tells us that there is no place or language where their voice is not heard.

Now, that's not the way men see it, but that's the way God says it is. You look at the stars and you look at the wonder of the universe, and I mentioned earlier that science is coming around a lot. I watched a video series awhile back called *Our Privileged Planet*, where these NASA scientists were talking about the earth, and they weren't necessarily Christians, but they were people who were aware of God in some way. They were NASA scientists with all these PhD's, and they were talking about how amazing it is, that as the more we've gotten to know about the universe, it's astonishing the circumstances that surround our privileged planet. I think that was the name of the video, actually. *Our Privileged Planet*. Did I say that already? They said that when you look at it all, there are thousands, there are millions of galaxies. The Milky Way is one galaxy, and there are like millions of galaxies. So there are billions, and billions, and billions of stars, but in these millions of galaxies, a galaxy has a couple million stars in it, which would have different planets around these stars, just like the sun is a star that has planets around it.

It's so rare. Galaxies are these tumultuous entities. I mean, stuff's flying around in these galaxies, and earth, in the Milky Way galaxy, the very place that we are, is uniquely situated so that we're in the sweet spot, this narrow sweet spot of this gigantic galaxy, and not only are we in the sweet spot, but we are on the edge of the galaxy, so that because of our location in the Milky Way, where we are – this is like a dog talking about science, here. I don't know a lot of science, here. I understand that. Get *Our Privileged Planet* and you can hear those guys say it, but they were saying that we are located on the edge of our galaxy where we can see out in a unique way probably that no other place in the known universe can. We have visibility that no other place does. Now, is that by accident? Of course not. The Lord stretched out the heavens and He's placed the earth.

We used to think that Christians who hadn't studied their Bibles carefully yet thought the earth was at the center of the solar system, and we found out that it wasn't. Now, that was misreading the Bible. In fact, the Bible never addresses that particular issue, but it's just phenomenological. It looks like the sun's revolving around us. In fact, the people who sometimes want to make fun of that, we still use the phrase sunrise and sunset every day on your news broadcast. Well, technically you're being really old fashioned, you know, because the sun doesn't rise. It's phenomenological language. And then the Bible speaks in that way, but the Bible has told us from the beginning that we are at the center of God's reality, and the more they discover, they see that our galaxy and our place in the galaxy appears to be at the very center of the universe. Isn't that amazing? What are the odds?

Okay, enough on that. The reality is God has made Himself known so lavishly. Psalm 19 says that. You say, "He should write it in the skies." He has. "Make His truth accessible." Romans 1:19 says God made His truth evident within every person. He made it evident to them. He made it evident within them. He's written the truth of who He is in the very fabric of our being so that we are without excuse. Atheism is a small religion in every age and in every generation, because we know God is real. Unbelievers flock into all kinds of weird religions, but usually there's some kind of religion. Atheism is always a minority. So God's been lavish in general revelation, but He's been lavish in special revelation.

I mean, He gave the Old Testament itself, a thousand years of revelation through prophets. He speaks. He comes and He speaks through the nation of Israel, and He demonstrates His glory in the nation of Israel impacting Egypt, and Babylon, and Assyria, and touching all these nations around them as He works in that group of people. Prophets like Jonah go to Nineveh and speak the word of God to those wicked Ninevites. That's how good God is. He spreads forth His word. So you have a thousand years of revelation in the Old Testament from 1400 to 400 BC, and then He speaks through the apostles, but the message when you look at the Bible is look at the Lord speaking and speaking perfectly, and He gives this perfect book. The Bible is perfect on its history. It's perfect on its geography. It's really a great study to look at all the things that they thought were wrong that the Bible said, and to watch how the dominos fall. Sodom and Gomorrah is exactly where the Bible said Sodom and Gomorrah is, even though others said for hundreds of years it wasn't. Just keep digging. He's spoken so wonderfully in His word, and He gives us the Gospels, and He gives us these other apostles speaking, but most supremely, He gives us His Son.

That's what John is saying in John 3 is that the Lord has spoken. He's told us what we need to know. Look back here at John 3.

John 3:31 ~ "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies;

He says, "God sent His Son into the world to speak and to tell us what God is like, and He knows. He is God Himself there in Heaven forever. God is not stingy with His truth, and if people would just look at Jesus..." and then he's recorded who Jesus is in this wonderful book. He gives His Spirit to anyone who will ask Him genuinely, "Lord, teach me," and the Spirit will help you to see the reality, open your eyes to see the glory of Christ. God has not been stingy. He's been amazingly, lavishly, extravagantly generous in His communication. That's the lavishness of revelation. That's the first part of a proper perspective.

Secondly, let's look at the wickedness of unbelief. Unbelief is actually the height of wickedness. You have it in this passage. He uses that term. He doesn't say, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not believe the Son..." but he says, "He who does not obey," and I said that's a word which means to be invincible. John the Baptist, in the Spirit of God putting this verse in here, is saying, "It's worse than just not believing. It is being unwilling to be convinced," and the idea is there's this avalanche of weight of evidence in the creation, in the Person Himself. They know when they hear the Name of Jesus. I mean, isn't it amazing how unique Jesus is among every other topic?

I was talking to someone the other day about how when you watch those TV shows where they have different religions come on, like Larry King has a Muslim, he has a Jew, he has a New Age guy, he has a Roman Catholic, and he has one guy who really preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ, all 6 or 7 of those guys if there are 7 of them have different viewpoints, but isn't it amazing how it can become 6 against 1? I remember watching one when John MacArthur was sharing, and he was being very gracious and clear on what he was saying about Jesus, and to watch the Rabbi and the Mullah almost like joining hands against John MacArthur. What can bring a Jew and a Muslim together? Jesus Christ will bring them together. They will come in opposition to Him. Why? Because they know in their hearts His is who He says He is, and they hate Him. Jesus Christ alone can inspire that kind of response. You will either bow before Him or you will hate Him, and if you hate Him, you will be judged.

Unbelief is wicked because, according to the Bible, it is so obvious that He alone is who He says He is. He is the One man who comes speaking for God. He's the One who came from Heaven, but people would rather believe anything else than to listen to Jesus Christ. I get amazed at that. I mean, think of the world religions that are out there, how ridiculous they are. Mormonism is supposedly Christian. It's the new revelation of Jesus Christ. The problem is it's totally inconsistent with the original revelation of Jesus Christ. Mormonism teaches that we all are going to be God one day. If you're a good Mormon, you're going to be God one day, and you're going to have your own planet, and you're going to be able to propagate your own planet. That's Mormonism. How ridiculous. And there's no archeological evidence for the book of Mormon. There's zero.

I talked to some Mormon missionaries that came to my house one day. They were young guys, and they were very nice. I mean, you have to admit they have good commercials and they're nice people. They came to my house and I was talking to them, and I said, "You know, guys, you say this is a new revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the New Testament. It's the third testament, right? The Book of Mormon." They said, "Yes." I said, "Well, when I read my Old Testament, the Old Testament says that I'm supposed to test everything. Everything that's going to come after this is going to be consistent with what God has already given. Deuteronomy 18, read that and you'll see Moses lays down principles. There must be consistency. If somebody comes along and teaches something different than what you've already received, reject it. So the test is what's already come, and what you find as you read through the Bible, and especially when you come to the New Testament, they're always saying, 'What I'm telling you is consistent with what Moses said. What I'm telling you is what Isaiah said. What I'm telling you is what Jeremiah said.' There's this consistency, this insistence on it. When you come to the Book of Mormon, you find something totally inconsistent."

What I said to them is, "You know, the Old Testament and the New Testament are proved archeologically, the facts that they say. You can find verification for what they say about history and geography. The Book of Mormon has zero proof that there were any races of people that lived in North America like they say. There's no archeological evidence, so why would you say that this is consistent with the Old Testament and the New Testament which are verifiable?" It's a lie, but people like hearing from some angel Maroni that appeared to Joseph Smith in a cave. They would rather believe that, and it can even happen in evangelical circles.

I was watching last week – I don't make a regular thing of watching TBN, but they had a good show on, or at least I thought it was a good show – *The Greatest Hits of*

Sandy Patti, or something like that. I like the way she sings. I watched it, and I was really blessed by that program. Bill Gaither was sharing, but then after it, there came on a commercial about this little boy who went to heaven. Have you seen that? The title of the book is *Heaven is for Real*, and it's written by the son of a pastor in Nebraska, an evangelical pastor. This little boy was 3 years and 10 months old when he was rushed to the hospital. I haven't read the book yet. I've just read enough to know what was going on. His appendix burst, and he somehow after that has let out details of what he allegedly experienced when he was in this situation. He saw things. He saw Jesus. He saw John the Baptist. He saw his grandfather, his great grandfather who had wings. We're not going to have wings in heaven. Nothing in the Bible says that. That's Frank Capra theology. Frank Capra is the one in *It's a Wonderful Life*. We don't get our wings. Angels have wings. But anyway, this kid may have had some experiences, but I know Satan can give experiences. At three years and ten months, I don't remember anything that happened when I was three years and ten months, but even if I did and it came out over years (and now 1.5 million copies have been sold in that. I couldn't get a more up-to-date figure), who cares what this 3-year-old kid thinks he saw? When we have, "He went to heaven and back," then John 3:31, "He who is from above is above all." As he said earlier in this chapter, look at John 3:11.

John 3:11 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.

Jesus is saying, "Look, I speak of what I know when I talk about God." Look at Verse 13:

John 3:13 ~ No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

Why do we want to go buy some book from somebody that thinks they went to Heaven, when we have the Book from the One who came from Heaven? We have the perfect truth, and so it is wicked to want to go after those new, fanciful things when we have the tried and true, perfect revelation of Jesus Christ. You see how the Father must feel when His Son whom He has set His seal upon (Chapter 6), has sealed as His authentic representative, and given the Spirit without measure, the Father who loves the Son has revealed the Son, the Son who is disclosed fully (John 1:18), who made the invisible God visible, and has given us full revelation of God, how offended must the Father be when people run after everything else.

They say things like, “Would God be clearer, they could just see.” That’s the most ridiculous thing in the world. It’s like thinking that it’s dark at 12 noon on a cloudless day. “It’s too dark out here.” The reason it’s too dark is because you’re blinded by the light so much that you have to close your eyes. Unbelief is a wicked thing before God. Now, we know we can’t judge anybody. We were unbelievers. It’s only by grace that God opened our eyes. So there’s no judgmentalness, but what it is, is seeing the reality. What this says is that the greatest tragedy when you witness to someone is not that they will end up in hell. That’s a tragedy. Here it’s talked about. The greatest tragedy is that Jesus Christ is robbed of glory, that they are robbing Him of the glory due His Name. That is the greatest tragedy. That’s how God sees it. That’s not how you and I naturally see it, but that’s how God the Father sees it, and He will deal with it accordingly. When we have that perspective, it changes our agenda.

Certainly we love the sinner. We know we’re just like them. We should never speak down to people. We should come on our knees brokenhearted, “There but for the grace of God go I. I would be exactly where you are, friend, but please believe in Jesus Christ, but know that the biggest issue is not even our souls. The biggest issue is the glory of One so worthy as Jesus Christ.” That is the message of the Lord, and when we understand that, it helps us to have the right attitude as we share. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon talked about the effect of his mother in his life who witnessed to him. Spurgeon didn’t come to be a believer til he was like 16. He wrote this about his mother Eliza Spurgeon. He says:

I cannot tell how much I owe the solemn words of my good mother. I remember on one occasion her praying like this: Now Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul will bear a swift witness against them at the Day of Judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.

What astonishing words for a mother to pray. Spurgeon wrote:

The thought of my mother bearing a swift witness against me pierced my conscience. How can I forget when she bowed her knee, and with her arms about my neck, continued to pray, “Oh that my son might live before Thee.”

That’s the balance. That’s what we’re called to do, to lift up Christ and to call people to Him, and to realize that in calling them to Him, we are offering them the most wonderful news the world has ever known, the news they desperately need to hear. But we’re doing more than that. We’re bringing more of the bride to the

Bridegroom, and our joy should be in the joy of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. That's where our joy should be. Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, we thank You for the wonder of what You've done in the Gospel. We know that we can say with Paul that we are of all men most unworthy. We rejoice in the worthiness of our Savior, that Jesus Christ is worthy, that His perfect life fulfilling all the Law, His atoning death offering His blood in our place for sin, bearing the wrath of God for us on Calvary, paid in full the debt that we owed, that He might give us a righteousness that we have not earned, but we marvel at so great a salvation. We pray that You would help us to be people who walk in increasing wonder at Your grace, and people who are more and more God-centered in our thinking, that our greatest concern would be to bring honor to our Savior. Lord, we know that as we lift Him up, as we lift Him up more, and more, and more, He's promised He will draw all men to Him. Help us lift Him up, Lord. We pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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