

# Coming into the Light

## John 3:16-21

**Introduction:** Take your Bibles and let's read John 3:16-21,

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

When somebody tells us they love us it makes us feel pretty good doesn't it? What does it mean to the average human being when they are told they are loved? How about this? "That person finds something desirable in me that makes them want to be with me. They consider me virtuous or attractive or admire my character." And this is true in our world and between human beings. To be loved is to experience all the things just mentioned and more. BUT...when God says this it is a vastly different reality. With this statement, 21 century mankind imagines God to be saying all the things humans say to one another, but nothing could be further from the truth. John 3:16 is not God's affirmation of your worthiness of love, but an affirmation of God's worthiness to be trusted, obeyed and loved by us. Let me try to explain with a few verses from John.

**John 1:9-11** <sup>9</sup> There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. <sup>11</sup> He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

**John 2:24-25** <sup>24</sup> But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup> and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

**John 3:10-11** <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> "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.

Paul goes even further in explaining who you and I are before God.

**Ephesians 2:1-3** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup> Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

**Romans 3:9-11** <sup>9</sup> What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; <sup>10</sup> as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; <sup>11</sup> THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11** <sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

What are all these verses really saying. We are not worthy to be loved. We have spit in the face of God with our sin, rebellion and self sufficiency. We have received life from God and everything needed to sustain life and yet we have not offered gratitude, a desire to please Him or love in return. We have rejected God's claims on us and have rejected His righteous standard. So...In the light of these facts....what in the world does God love? Perhaps the better question is Why in the world does God Love?

- The Love of God tells us something about God's nature [16]
- The Love of God tells us something about God's purpose at the Cross [17]
- The Love of God reveals the truth about the nature of man [18-20]
- The Love of God reveals the truth about the good deeds of men [21]

### **The Love of God tells us something about God's nature [16]**

**John 3:16** <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**For God so loved the world:** Because of the popularity of this verse it cannot be changed in the least in any translation for fear of everyone hating the translation. BUT...it says "Thus God loved the world." Let me make it even clearer. "This is how God loved the world."

**He gave His only begotten Son:** Scripture then answers the "how" and in so doing changes love from an deserved emotion God felt for the world to an undeserved kindness that God did for the world. There is no doubt about John's intention here because he elaborated in another place in Scripture by saying:

**1 John 4:10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Paul also explains it this way:

**Romans 5:5-8** <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. <sup>6</sup> For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. <sup>8</sup>

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

**That whoever believes in Him shall not perish:** The way God loved is revealed by How God loved but it only matters when we know why God Loved.

He did not love us because we were lovable! God declares that we are His enemies and are hopelessly estranged from Him. We are said to be dead to Him but alive to our own fallen natures. We break all of His commands and we hate one another. The best among us cannot change our natures. We need to be “Born Again” “Born from Above”...we need a new heart and radical intervention. We need a spiritual resurrection and none of the things we need are within our own power to do. Nicodemus understood this when He said to Jesus...”How can these things be? SO...how can they be.

**2 Corinthians 5:21** <sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**Hebrews 2:9** <sup>9</sup> But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

**Have eternal life:** God loved you in your sin or else you would have never been saved. Let me prove that. God sent Christ into the world before you were ever born. There was nothing you did or could have done to merit God’s love for you. You were and are Adam’s sons and daughters.

Coming forward to your lifetime now: God then acted again, while you were still a sinner to make you alive to Him and give you the ability to trust Him for your salvation. Why did HE do it? He wanted you! He wanted you to live with Him in eternity in Joy. Eternity is long and this life is short. God wanted you to share His Eternal Life.

Only God is Eternal. Forever is not the same as Eternal. God is not wishing to give you a life that just goes on and on. He wants you to become a partaker in the very nature and quality of His very life.

**2 Peter 1:2-4** <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

**The Love of God tells us something about God’s purpose at the Cross [17]**

**John 3:17-18** <sup>17</sup> "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

**God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world:** Not the first time at least. And we are still living under the first purpose of Christ's coming. The word "judge" means condemn. Literally to scrutinize and determine its merits. For the world that means condemnation. Just watch the news. Listen to the hatred that comes out of a driver's mouth in traffic. Look at the killing of war and the slaughter of the unborn. What can you say about a world like this. Stop thinking about your mother or best friend in church....this is the world we are talking about. How is it possible that Christ did not come to condemn it?

This speaks directly to the opening premise of our passage which is: "This is the way God Loved the World." Rather than condemn the world Jesus chose and planned to be condemned by the world. He took every judgment of yours and mine and bore our shame.

**1 Peter 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

We should be cursed by God, but instead God cursed Christ.

**Galatians 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"-

Why did He do it? Because He loved you inexplicably. There is no explanation. There is absolutely no logical reason not to trust, love and give yourself to such a God. This is the character of saving faith.

Not condemnation, **but that the world might be saved through Him:** Not what the world deserved. Not what you and I deserved but what we did not deserve or even want. We were not seeking it because we did not know that it existed to seek. We sought the world and fulfillment there. We acted by nature...but God too acted by nature and His was Love. His action was to give and his purpose was to redeem, transform and reconcile you to Himself.

**Ephesians 1:3-8** <sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

## **The Love of God reveals the truth about the nature of man [18-20]**

**John 3:18-20** <sup>18</sup> "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

**"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already:** God acts this way because mankind is and was already hopeless. People will say to me, "I don't really have anything against Christ, but I am certainly not going to give Him my life." In this way men hope to stake out a piece of neutral ground. They don't speak against God but will not surrender to Him either. It is hoped that God will just live and let live. And this might be possible accept for this reality:

**Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God Men:** All men are starting in the hole. They are already condemned before they ever hear the gospel that we are preaching here today. It was not necessary for God to send Christ into the world to condemn the world. It is already condemned. It is at war with itself and with God. It breaks every commandment and then justifies itself with religion and a smug assurance that there is always someone worse than us. THE DEFAULT CONDITION OF HUMANITY IS **"CONDEMNED."**

**This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil:** Men are revealed to be condemned by this simple fact. They run from the light. They hate the preaching of Christ who is the light of the world. Christ exposes the sin of humanity by being sinless....our lovelessness with love and our selfishness with selflessness. HE is everything we are not because of sin. It was not Christ purpose to condemn men when He came but the condemnation came nevertheless because men reject and flee from the one single thing that will save them. The light of the glory of the gospel of Christ.

**For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed:** This is a basic truth about humanity. In order to maintain the pretense of being "okay" or "basically good" they need to stay away from Christ and the preaching of Christ. Why? Because it is like light that exposes their true nature. The Light of Christ either humbles a man to the point of coming to Christ alone for salvation or it drives that man farther into the darkness. No man is neutral toward Christ. It is not a possibility in this world. Jesus said so Himself.

**Luke 11:23** <sup>23</sup> "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters

**Luke 16:13** <sup>13</sup> "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other.

## **The Love of God reveals the truth about the good deeds of men [21]**

**John 3:21** <sup>21</sup> "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

**He who practices the truth comes to the Light:** The converted however know they are sinners. They know that they are known by God...read like an open book. They have no reason not to come into the light of Christ. They already know that He knows their sin and has loved them sacrificially while they were yet in their sin.

Men are converted by God when they comprehend their own hopelessness and sinfulness and trust only in Christ's work of dying in their place. You cannot come to Christ without coming into the light.

**1 John 1:5-10** <sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Believers should be the first ones to acknowledge that they are sinners. This is so counterintuitive. We prefer to become legalists and nitpick and parse words about sin. It is so easy to malign a person for having a bad mouth. What does that say about us?

John explains that believers should get out into the light. Not so that people can see how good and wonderful and sinless they are. Please!!! Just look at this passage we just read with me. It is being in the light that is our hope as sinners. The light reveals our sin and judgmental hearts. It shows us that God has forgiven us great sin and cared for us in our need. That is why we can do that to others. That is why we can be offended without seeking revenge.

[6] Walking in the light is equal to admitting that you are a sinner. Practicing the truth means the truth that you are a sinner....Christ alone is righteous and only Christ's blood has cleansed us.

[8] Walking in the light is all about fully embracing your standing as a sinner saved by Grace. This is the basis for our fellowship with one another not our pompous, self righteousness. People who do not acknowledge their sinfulness call God a liar. [10]

[9] The fact that we can confess our sins and be forgiven is the basis for sinners to love one another, forgive one another and be gracious to one another.

**So that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God:** Walking in the light of Christ lays us so bare before God that we would not dare to boast about anything good that we have done. Instead it brings the knowledge that all good that we do or have become is equally a work of Grace from God.

**Ephesians 2:10** <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

**CONCLUSION:** John 3:16 is about God and not about us. Yes God does love you, but the rest of the story is this: That is a total miracle of Grace and Mercy. It transcends human understanding because we have been rebellious and ungrateful toward God.

To stop at the love of God is to miss the Cross. Why was there a cross? Because there is nothing in mankind that can merit eternal life in the presence of God. For God to spend

eternity with fallen men would be like a Jew spending eternity in a room with Hitler or Ahmadinejad. Like going on vacation with the person who hates you most in this world. It is unthinkable for our enemies to become our most intimate and beloved companions.

So there was the cross! This is the way God loved the world...HE gave his blessed and sinless Son. God the Son would leave the glory and joy of heaven for the misery and grief of earth. He would suffer rejection so that He would know your pain. He would be lied about, and hated without a cause so that He would experience the outrage of sin. He would live in your shoes but He himself would not sin.

Why is this important? Because this is the Love of God! Not some warm feeling that he had because you are so easy to like. It is the full and total sacrifice for you and He did it before you were even born. He did it knowing that you would come into the world fallen and would be an enemy. That you would be born into darkness and that He would have to pull you out during your earthly life. This is unilateral, incomprehensible love. It is Grace, Mercy and Kindness.

**Titus 3:3-7** <sup>3</sup> For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

**Ask for a verdict:** Do not keep yourselves back from Christ. Give your life fully to the one who has given His life fully to you. He will not disappoint you. There is not a better life out there than the one he will give to you. I know because the Bible says that...

**Psalms 103:8-19** <sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. <sup>9</sup> He will not always strive *with us*, Nor will He keep *His anger* forever. <sup>10</sup> He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. <sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. <sup>13</sup> Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust. <sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. <sup>16</sup> When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer. <sup>17</sup> But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, <sup>18</sup> To those who keep His covenant And remember His precepts to do them. <sup>19</sup> The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.