

Saved Through Christ

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INI - SDG

John 3:1-17 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? ¹¹ "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ "For

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

In the very ancient church, the Sundays in lent were often a time to prepare initiates for baptism. Hence the lessons for these Sundays were often a review of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Our text this morning certainly reflects this ancient custom. There is a lot that Jesus hints at in his talk with Nicodemus, the power of baptism, the marks of the church, but mainly Jesus' message is quite simple and straight forward. He has come to bring salvation to sinful men.

This Salvation is exclusive to Christ.

Before Nicodemus can understand salvation through Jesus, he needs to understand that there is no hope in the law of Moses.

Jesus begins by laying this foundation. Salvation is a thing that is exclusive to Christ. Salvation comes only from Jesus, and it is not available any where else.

Jesus tries to make this clear to Nicodemus in verse six, where he says, **“That which is born of flesh is flesh.”**

When we think of John chapter three we often think of verse sixteen where Jesus proclaims that beautiful proclamation of the Gospel. But here in verse six you have this absolute condemnation of everything that man has ever thought or done or attempted.

“That which is born of flesh is flesh” and has nothing at all to do with the Spirit. The two are oil and water.

With these words Jesus completely dismisses all attempts of men to claim any good thing of themselves. Everything man has ever done or thought

Jesus calls it “flesh” it comes from flesh, and it is only flesh. It has no part in the kingdom of God or the work of the Spirit.

In verse thirteen Jesus reminds us, **“no one has ascended to heaven except he who came down from heaven.”**

It is not for lack of trying. Many have tried to ascend to heaven by many different means. Jesus says no one has ever made. Again no one except Jesus has ever made it to heaven, and therefore no one except Jesus can offer salvation, the way to God.

When Jesus was in the garden He prayed, **“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;”** Matthew 26:39. But the cup didn’t pass from Him. Jesus arose and drank that cup, that is He died on the cross. Therefore, it is evident that the Father’s answer was, “no it is not possible. There is no other way.”

Jesus had to die and rise again and outside of Jesus there is no chance of Salvation.

If we go back to our Old Testament reading of God’s promise to Abraham. God told Abraham those who bless you will be blessed and those who curse you will be cursed. God was speaking there about Abraham’s descendant, Jesus Christ. Those who bless the name of Jesus are blessed through Jesus. Those who curse His name and therefore stand against Him are cursed. God’s blessing comes exclusively through Abraham’s descendant, Jesus Christ.

It was not long in the early church before people began to make exceptions. What about Aristotle and Plato? These were great men and great thinkers. Surely, they are not lost, people thought.

So too in our day, what Jesus says here is a hard saying. Many churches today think and preach that other religions have their way of salvation and we have ours but they all lead to the same god.

Jesus utterly rejects this thinking. That which is of the flesh is flesh. No one has ascended except only the Son Man who came down from heaven. Salvation is exclusively the free gift of God which given to us through Jesus Christ.

Secondly this salvation is objective, that is it is a thing that is outside of ourselves.

A call to action is an important part of any persuasive speech or ad campaign. You want to leave the listener with one simple thing they can do to get involved, to help out, or to become a part of the movement.

Jesus has such a call to action in His discussion with Nicodemus but what is odd about it is that it is not a thing that Nicodemus can do. Instead, the action is entirely on God's part.

The first thing that Jesus tells Nicodemus is that you must be born again. There is the call to action. However, when Nicodemus attempts to understand how to do this, Jesus makes it clear that he can not do it. "You must be born of water and the spirit." This is a thing of the spirit not of the flesh.

This is a thing entirely outside of yourself. This is thing that God does for you, not that you do for God.

Jesus is clearly talking about baptism here. Baptism is repeatedly described as a new birth of water and the Spirit.

Tit 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Jesus makes it clear that even baptism is not something you do for God but that God does for you.

Jesus illustrates this with the example of the serpent in the wilderness. The bronze serpent was put on a pole and when anyone was bitten if they looked at the serpent they were saved. That serpent was outside of themselves. The promise from God stood regardless of what the individual thought of the promise. If they looked at the serpent, they were saved even if they didn't believe they were going to be.

Similarly, Naaman the Syrian when he bathed in the river did not believe that his leprosy would be cleansed. It didn't matter what he believed the promise from God was given in connection with the waters of the Jordan and he was cleansed as God said.

So also are God's promises in baptism. They are there and they are given regardless of what the individual thinks or believes. So also, God's promises through Jesus Christ. Jesus died for the sins of the world and that is true regardless of what the individual believes.

This is a thing of the Spirit. This is a thing of God. It is not dependent on us. It is a call to action, but the action is from God to us

Finally, this salvation is universal.

“God so loved the world,” “that through Him the world might be saved.”

God sent his only Son into the world to offer to the world this free gift of salvation. Jesus died for all. Jesus gives salvation to all.

It is true that not all accept the gift which is here offered to them, but nevertheless it is offered to all, regardless of who they are or what they have done.

Salvation is the free gift of God. It is accomplished by Christ without any help from us. It is offered to the whole world, and it is given only through Jesus Christ. Amen