

“Whosoever Believeth”  
John 3:16-18, 36  
(Preached at Trinity, November 1, 2017)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen, Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. He was impressed by the teaching of Jesus and he had never seen anyone do the miracles that Jesus was doing. He knew He was a teacher sent from God.
2. Nicodemus believed in Jesus as a mighty teacher and miracle worker, but he didn’t recognize Jesus as the Christ sent from God. He didn’t know Jesus as Savior. Jesus began teaching him about the Kingdom and the necessity of looking to the Savior who would be lifted up.
3. The great need of Nicodemus and all men is deliverance from the poisonous sting of sin and death. Jesus is the only way of salvation. We must look to Him and Him alone. Jesus directed Nicodemus to the type or foreshadow displayed through the brass serpent Moses raised in the wilderness.  
**John 3:14-15 NAU** - "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>15</sup> so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life."
4. Continuing the thought of **Verse 15** Jesus continues with **Verse 16**.  
**Verse 15** speaks of the necessity of faith. **Verse 16** directs our attention to the object of our faith and the wondrous love of God in sending the Savior who must be trusted and received by faith.
5. As I pointed out before, **John 3:16** is rich in truth. I’ve divided it into four sections—four sermons.
  - A. First, the amazing love of God – “For God So Loved”
  - B. Second, the infinite gift of God – “That He Gave His Son”
  - C. Third, the objects of eternal life – “Whosoever Believeth”
  - B. Finally, we’ll look at the outcome of their belief – “Eternal Life”
6. We’ve looked at the first two.
  - A. “For God So Loved.” Although God has a general love for all men, the whole world, demonstrated by His goodness displayed upon the whole earth, He has a marvelous, particular love for His elect—those He set His love on from before time began. They are the objects of His redeeming grace and those for whom Christ came to die.
  - B. “That He Gave His Son” – our salvation is a gift. We deserve nothing but God’s condemnation but God delivered that which was most precious, His only begotten Son, that we might have eternal life.  
**Romans 6:23 NAU** - "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

7. Tonight, I want us to look at the third element of **John 3:16** – “So that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish . . .”
- A. This single phrase has sparked endless debate. It is often the “go to” passage or used as proof text against Calvinism. The argument goes something like this. “God’s sovereign election is unfair and infringes upon the freewill of man. After all, John 3:16 declares that “whosoever will may come.”
  - B. This verse, however, does not say whosoever will may come. It says, “whoever believes.”
    1. This phrase doesn’t say anything about the freedom of the human will or the extent of the atonement. It simply tells us that of all who are in the world, those who believe will not perish under God’s judgment, but instead will receive eternal life. The Holman Christian Standard translates it:  
**John 3:16 CSBO** - "so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."
    2. This phrase defines those who have eternal life: those who believe.
8. As always, we must allow the parameters of our theology shaped by Scripture to instruct us as to the interpretation of any passage. Our Confession (1689 LBC) declares in Chapter 1:9 *Of the Holy Scriptures*: “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.”
- I. What is the extent of the “whosoever?”
- Scripture gives us some important elements to shape our answer.
- A. The nature of the Covenant of Redemption and God’s eternal purpose define the “whoever”
    1. God looked down from eternity and saw that all men had defiled themselves.  
**Psalms 14:2-3 NAU** - "The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. <sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one."
    2. Having witnessed the corruption of all men did God determine to save them all? Is it His purpose to save all men? If you answer yes, is God’s purpose being hindered or diminished. Is God being restricted from doing what He has determined to do.
    3. God is accomplishing His eternal purpose according to the Covenant of Redemption – He has elected a people and has sent His only begotten Son to redeem them.  
**Matthew 1:21 NAU** - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."
    4. Was the purpose of God in salvation definite or indefinite? Was the death of Christ designed merely to make salvation possible or was it designed to actually save His people?  
In the eternal Covenant of Redemption God gave His Son a people of which none would be lost

**John 6:38-39 NAU** - "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

**John 17:2 NAU** - "even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life."

- B. Second, the particular nature of love defines the "whosoever"
1. As we've seen, God has a general love for all of humanity demonstrated by the display of His goodness upon all. God has a general love even for His enemies.  
**Matthew 5:44-45 NAU** - "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."
  2. We must not confuse God's general love with His particular love for the elect. Paul makes this distinction in his instruction to husbands and wives.  
**Ephesians 5:25-27 NAU** - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
    - a. Paul describes the unique love that Jesus has for His church – He laid down His life for the church.
    - b. Likewise, husbands are to have a unique, particular, sacrificial love for their wives.
- C. The nature of the substitutionary atonement
1. What is the nature of the atonement of Christ? Did He not bear all of the sins of His people as their substitute? Was Jesus the Substitute for all men?
  2. We have to understand the nature of propitiation.  
 Definition - The satisfaction of God's anger and wrath by the covering over of our sins through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ to God - thus securing our acceptance before God.  
 Or more simply: To satisfy or appease God's divine justice through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ
  3. The "whoever" needs to be understood in the context of the atonement. If Jesus Christ died for all then all would be saved.

- II. The focus of this portion of **John 3:16** is upon the faith that identifies the objects of God's grace – "whoever believes . . ."
- A. On one hand the grace of salvation is open to all
1. It is true that "whoever" believes will be saved  
**Revelation 22:17 NAU** - "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."  
 The KJV translates it: "whosoever will, let him take the water of life"  
**Romans 10:13 NAS** - "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved."
  2. In the Gospel ALL are invited to come  
 "Whoever" - πᾶς ὄς - "All who" - the Greek word πᾶς carries the idea of universality – all, every
  3. Matthew Henry – "Though many of the world of mankind perish, yet God's giving his only-begotten Son was an instance of his love to the whole world, because through him there is a *general offer* of life and salvation made to all. It is love to the revolted rebellious province to issue out a proclamation of pardon and indemnity to all that will come in, plead it upon their knees, and return to their allegiance. *So for God loved the apostate lapsed world* that he sent his Son with this fair proposal, that *whosoever believes in him, one or other, shall not perish.*"<sup>1</sup>
- B. Men will not come, not because they have not been invited but because they WILL NOT come
1. They lack moral ability  
**John 6:44 NAU** - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."  
**John 6:65 NAU** - "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."
  2. They are satisfied in their sin. Jesus says in **Verse 19** they are in love with their sin.  
**John 3:19 NAU** - "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."
  3. This is at the heart of Jesus' opening words to Nicodemus  
**John 3:3 NAU** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
  4. **Revelation 22:17** says, "And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."  
 The problem with lost humanity is they are not thirsty. They are satisfied.
- C. What does it mean to believe?
1. It means to look to Christ alone as God's means of salvation
    - a. It means to look upon the righteousness of Christ as our righteousness
    - b. It means to look to the cross alone as the means of removing your guilt and satisfying Divine justice.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1930.

2. To believe upon Christ is to desire to follow Him. It is to see Him as grand and glorious; as worthy of our obedience and worship.
3. God's gift of eternal life must be received. His gift of a Savior must be received.
4. You must lay down all of your own schemes and trust in Christ alone  
Men naturally try to turn the gift to a wage.  
We try to earn eternal life while despising the gift.
5. God implores sinners to come and partake of the riches of His gift.  
**I Isaiah 55:1 NAU** - "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost."

#### Conclusion:

1. Have you received God's gift? The thing about God's gift is its greatness overshadows everything else.  
Here's the great paradox. God says come, take, receive – for free. But those who receive it are willing give up all else to have it. God demands, give up all, go sell all. This gift is all sufficient.
2. Those who receive Christ receive Him in His entirety. He is both Savior and Lord.  
**Romans 10:9-10 NAU** - "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; <sup>10</sup> for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."