

The Love of God
John 3:16-21

Introduction (John 3:1-15)

This morning we come to what may well be the most familiar verse in all the Bible - John 3:16. But before we can look at that verse and those that follow it, we must make sure that we understand the context in which it is set.

Remember from last week that John 3 is the account of Nicodemus coming to Jesus and seeking to understand the nature of the Kingdom of God and how one enters it. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin - the ruling council of Israel (John 3:1). He was also a respected teacher of the Jewish law (John 3:10). He had seen the signs that Jesus had been doing and because of them had recognized that, at the very least, Jesus was a teacher from God (John 3:2, cf. 2:23). For that reason, he had come to Jesus one night during the Feast of Unleavened Bread to learn from Him. It is probable, in view of the preaching of John the Baptist, that Nicodemus was already wondering if Jesus could indeed be the promised Messiah.

Jesus demonstrated His omniscience by answering Nicodemus' question even before he asked it. Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to see the kingdom of God, "*you must be born again*" (John 3:3). Nicodemus did not understand this direct statement (John 3:4). As I pointed out last week, Nicodemus would have understood a simile of becoming like a new born through repentance and entering the kingdom of God through dedication of one's self to following its religious laws. That was what the Pharisees taught and believed, but what Jesus said was much more radical. It required becoming something new before even being able to enter the kingdom. Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant other than what He was demanding was beyond human capability.

Jesus went on to explain that to enter the kingdom of God a person had to be born both of water and the Spirit (vs. 5-8). As I explained last week, I take a minority view and think being born of water referred to the baptism offered by John as a sign of repentance and desire to be prepared for the kingdom of heaven. It was an act of the flesh that was symbolic. John made it clear that this baptism was only a shadow of the reality needed, for the coming Messiah would baptize with the Spirit (John 1:33). Jesus told Nicodemus that for a person to be part of His kingdom, they needed to be born of water, (an act of man as a sign of repentance), and be born of the spirit (regenerated by the Spirit which is an act of God). Man is born dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1) and must be made alive by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:5; John 6:63). However, just as man cannot control the wind, man cannot control the Spirit.

Nicodemus wanted to know how these things could be (vs. 9). Jesus chided him for his ignorance of things he should have known, but then He also revealed to him new, heavenly things which Jesus knew about first hand because He was descended from heaven (vs. 13). Jesus called his attention to an Old Testament story to illustrate the nature of the faith that saves (vs. 14). It is this type of belief placed in the Son of Man who would be crucified that would bring about salvation. This was the "how" of being born again. The Spirit would regenerate the heart of the individual to belief in what God was doing through Jesus to bring about redemption.

I explained this illustration from the Old Testament last week, but it bears repeating. The story is found in Numbers 21:4-9. The children of Israel had received the Law of God at Mt. Sinai and were now in the wilderness making their way to the promised land, but even though they had already seen so many miracles from God, including the daily miracle of manna for food, they did not believe God and complained against Him. God sent fiery serpents among the people and many had already died. The

people repented and asked God to forgive them and remove the snakes. God did not get rid of the snakes or provide some sort of drug to cure the bite. Instead, He instituted a cure that would force them to demonstrate their faith. He commanded Moses to make a bronze replica of one of the snakes and set it on a standard. If a person who was bit by a snake would go look at that bronze serpent, they would be healed. If you believed what God said, you would do what He said and be healed simply by looking at the bronze serpent. True faith is an active belief and not an intellectual assent to stated propositions. The faith could have been weak and wavering and filled with doubts, but if the person believed enough to go look on the bronze serpent, they would live. At the same time, if they did not go look upon the bronze serpent, they would die regardless of how strongly they might have even claimed that they believed God. True faith results in actions in keeping with the professed belief.

That is the nature of faith required to be born again. A person must believe God with an active faith placed in Jesus, the Son of Man, who was lifted up - crucified - for our sins. This belief is something generated in the individual by the Spirit of God, yet, the promise is made to “whosoever will.” Salvation would be based on true belief that results in an active faith rather than man’s self effort to gain salvation by trying to be good in order to appease God and earn His favor. What a contrast to the system of the Pharisees that Nicodemus followed in which you had to earn your salvation through good works and diligence in keeping the law. Variations of such work based efforts to earn righteousness still exist in the many false religions, cults and even in many segments of professing Christianity. None of them can save you from sin and its consequences.

Jesus continued on in verse 16 to explain something even more wonderful to Nicodemus about how a person is born again and the nature of those who enter the kingdom of God. Jesus tells Nicodemus of the great love of God for all mankind.

God’s Love (John 3:16)

There are many wonderful verses in the Bible about God’s love, but few come close to describing His great love as succinctly and powerfully as John 3:16 (NASB) *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*

The verse begins with the little conjunction, “for,” which gives us the cause for God’s plan of redemption that Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus. The cause is His love.

It’s Greatness. The greatness of God’s love is magnified by the little adverb, “so,” which describes the manner of His love. It is not just that God loved the world, but that He “so” loved the world that He gave. God’s love for the world is seen clearly enough in His creation and provision for it, and as Colossians 1:17 points out, He holds it all together even in the present. This little adverb takes God’s love far beyond that for it directs us to what He gave - His Son.

The tense of the verb, “love” here takes into account all the actions of God’s love and views them as one great central fact. Jesus reaches back not only into the near past when He became a man, but also into eternity past. It also looks into the future near and far. It takes into account the near future when Jesus would die at Calvary, and then beyond that His Millennial reign, and then beyond that to eternity in Heaven. All of this is taken up as one great thought and presented as fact.

How can someone be born again? The source is through the unbounded, overflowing love of God that always has and always will be. We would not know love in any sense except for God. Our love for Him only exists because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). The greatest question for secular philosophers to wrestle with is not the origin of evil, but the existence of love and moral good, for they exist as reflections of the God who created us and cannot be explained or even defined apart from Him.

It’s Object. The object of God’s love is the world. John’s use of the term “world” here (κόσμος /cosmos) is in reference to mankind and not to either the system of the world or the creation as a whole.

It corresponds to “whoever believes” in the next phrase of the verse. John is clear in 1 John 2:15-16 about the nature of the world’s system which is evil. *“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”* The world’s system is not from God. He does not love it for it is contrary to Him and so we should not love it either.

Again we find that this is a great contrast to what Nicodemus would have believed as a Pharisee. They thought God loved only Jews and then only those Jews who were keeping the law and their system of traditions. For God to love the world, He would also have to love sinners, and even worse, Gentile sinners. Yet sinners are exactly the object of God’s love. Paul expressed this in Romans 5:8 saying, *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Jesus said that He did not come *“to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Luke 5:32). It is while we were enemies with God that He loved us and made provision for our salvation. 1 Peter 3:18 *“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;”*

In addition, contrary to the belief of the Pharisees, every single person born except Jesus Himself is a sinner. *“All we like sheep have gone astray”* (Isaiah 53:6). *“They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one”* (Psalm 14:3 / Romans 3:12). *“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

That sinners are the object of God’s love is one of the more astounding aspects of it! There are natural loves that we can all understand, but God’s love is amazing in how far out it extends. Consider that parents will naturally love their children simply because they are reflections of themselves. Yet God loved us though we were *“sons of disobedience”* and by nature *“children of wrath”* (Ephesians 2:2-3). God so loved us sinners that He made a way for us to be adopted as His children (Galatians 4:5).

Consider how a person will respond in love to someone that loves them. How is it that marriages form? Two people meet and find something attractive in the other so that they are kind to one another and show an interest in each other. A friendship forms and loving actions toward one another are followed by feelings of affection toward one another to the point that the two are willing to commit themselves to each other for the rest of their lives. The commitment is not made until there is a belief that the other person will love them. There was nothing attractive about us nor did God have any need for us. Yet God set His affection upon man and was good and kind to all men (Romans 2:4). Man’s response to God is one of disobedience and hatred as already mentioned, yet God still loves man. It is easy to love someone that loves you, but God loves even those that hate Him. It was out of love that Jesus called out to the Father to forgive even those that had placed Him on the cross to die. This is ἀγάπη / agape love, the love that chooses and gives of itself sacrificially for the best benefit of the other.

The object of God’s love is all mankind. There is no one who is so sinful that God’s love is not extended to them. Abraham was the son of an idolater. Jacob was a deceiver. David was an adulterer and murderer. The apostle Matthew was a dreaded tax-gatherer. Paul was a murder and persecutor of the church. The early believers in Ephesus were pagans who practiced witch craft. Those in the church at Corinth included those who had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, revilers and swindlers. Perhaps you have practiced some of these sins, but even if not these sins there are others, for who among us has not violated God’s laws? If you take something that is not yours without permission, even if it is just a pen from work, you are a thief. If you fail to reverence the name of the Lord, even if it is just an off handed remark, then you are a blasphemer. If you purposely tell someone something that is not true, even if it is just a face saving excuse, you are a liar. If you hate someone, even if only to the point of calling them names, you are liable in heaven’s court for murder. That is just the start of our violations of God’s laws. Yet, God extends His love to you regardless of your background or the sins you have committed.

What a shock to Nicodemus the Pharisee and to all those today that would want to restrict God's love only to those that meet their own criteria of righteousness. God's love extends to the sinner.

It's Sacrifice. While the object of God's love is amazing, the sacrifice He has made in the demonstration of that love is even more astounding. God loved the sinful world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. The nature of true love is to give of itself, and the greatness of that love is demonstrated by the value of what is given. God gave the most valuable and treasured object that exists - His only begotten Son.

Some have stumbled over this title for Jesus. In a way, that is understandable because it speaks of the inter-trinitarian relationship. With our limited minds we cannot understand fully the relationship of the Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The best we can do is to hold fast to what the Bible clearly says even if we don't understand how it all fits together. We have to leave what is beyond our current understanding as a mystery that will one day be explained in heaven.

The term, "only begotten Son," is a Messianic reference to the second person of the triune Godhead. He is unique, yet with equality in attributes, characteristics and abilities with the Father except that the Father is the Head of the Son (1 Corinthians 11:3) and so is greater (John 14:28). The Son matches the Father as the Creator (Colossians 1:16), and is eternal (Colossians 1:17), omniscient (John 2:24; 16:30;), omnipotent (Matthew 28:18); and the object of worship (Matthew 28:9; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8). Jesus claims to be one with the Father (John 10:30) and the one who reveals the Father (John 14:9). The only begotten Son is the eternal, living Word, who has become human flesh (John 1:1,14).

Though we cannot comprehend this fully, the gift God gave as the demonstration of His love was the second person of the triune Godhead. There is nothing more precious or valuable.

The sense of the Son being given is in keeping with the comment already made in verse 14. The gift was given for the ultimate purpose of being "lifted up" - to be made a sacrifice for sin on a cross. It would have been a sacrificial gift just for the Son to have laid aside part of His eternal glory to become a man, as mentioned in Philippians 2, but this was an even greater gift for the son was given for the purpose of being a sin sacrifice for man. There could not be any greater demonstration of true love. As Jesus said in John 15:13, "*greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*" Jesus also laid down His life for His enemies so that they could be redeemed and become His friends.

It's Offer. God's abounding love for man, even in his sinful state, was so great that the second person of the trinity, the only begotten Son of God, became a man in order to be a sacrifice for sin. This was for the purpose of giving man the offer "*that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

This is the same statement as made in verse 15 except for the addition of explaining the negative future that would be missed. "Perish" (ἀπόλλυμι / apollumi) here is not annihilation, for the word never means that. It is the opposite of eternal life and is used here as a negative contrast to give greater amplification to the positive gift of eternal life. The implication is, of course, that without this belief you will perish, which Jesus explains further in the verses that follow. It is used here to emphasize the great offer that God is making out of His love to whoever will believe on the Son.

Again, I must emphasize that this idea of belief is in keeping with the previous two verses. It is not an intellectual assent, but a belief that results in an active faith that trust Jesus and His sacrificial death as the payment for sin. It is a belief that understands who Jesus is as the Son of God and because of that seeks to follow Him. It is pretty silly to say that you believe that Jesus is God in human flesh and not also want to do what He says, for that only proves that you think yourself smarter than God. Tragically there are many people that do live in that manner. They profess one thing, but their lives demonstrate a belief opposite of their claim. They say they believe in God and Jesus, but they live as practical atheists.

Again we also find that the offer here in verse 16 is made in the same manner as in verse 15. It is a universal offer made to “whosoever believes.” It is not God’s sovereign election that keeps a person from salvation, that would be double election which may be a logical construct but is not something that is ever stated or even implied in the Scriptures. God does not elect people to Hell. God condemns men to Hell because man is sinful and follows his sinful nature in refusing to repent from his sin and self-righteousness to believe the loving offer that God has made to him that grants salvation from sin based upon God’s own sacrificial gift. Such people will be judged according to their own sinful deeds. God’s offer is made to all and Jesus’ sacrifice is sufficient for all (1 John 2:2), but man’s natural and sinful reaction is to refuse it and disobey God’s command that all people everywhere repent (Acts 17:30) and believe in Jesus Christ (1 John 3:23). The question is have you obeyed those commands to take advantage of God’s offer? If not, what will you do with His offer? How long will you remain disobedient to His command to repent and believe? You cannot control the Holy Spirit, but like the tax collector in Luke 18, you can beg God for His mercy.

God’s Purpose (John 3:17)

Nicodemus would have been astonished by what Jesus had said to this point. He would have continued in amazement by what Jesus continued on to say in verse 17. *“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”*

The Jews of that time were looking for a conquering Messiah. They longed for God to deliver them from their current oppression by Rome and restore Israel to its former glory that existed during the time of King David and King Solomon. They were looking for the establishment of an earthly kingdom with a powerful king whose throne would be in Jerusalem. They were looking for God to send a judge into the world that would punish the Gentile nations and bring them into subjection to Israel.

In this verse, Jesus states that the purpose of the coming of Messiah was exactly opposite of their expectations. Messiah was not coming to condemn the Gentiles, but to save everyone that would believe including Gentiles. It is interesting that root meaning of the word “judge” (κρίνω / krino) here means “to separate,” but the purpose of Jesus’ first coming was to save people from every tribe, people, tongue and nation and form them into one new group, the church (Ephesians 2:11-22; Revelation 7:9). Instead of coming to separate Jews and Gentiles, Jesus came to bring together all who would believe, both Jews and Gentiles. The Old Testament speaks to this issue in several places such as Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 2; Zechariah 2 and Malachi 1, but the ethno-centric pride of the Jews blinded them from seeing it.

It should be pointed out as well that Jesus would not need to come in order to judge the world. God had judged the world previously in the days of Noah for their utter wickedness, and He will do so again when the present Earth and Heavens are destroyed by fire and new Heavens and Earth and will be created (2 Peter 3:12,13). Jesus came the first time to bring salvation.

God’s Judgment (John 3:18)

Jesus gives hope for eternity in verses 14-17, but in verse 18 He begins to also give warnings. There is a judgement to come, but it will not be based on any human division such as nationality, language or people group. It will be based instead upon the response of the individual to Jesus Christ. Do you believe in Him or not? John 3:18, *“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.”*

Those who Believe. For those who believe, there is no judgement. Paul stated it this way in Romans 8:1, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* The person that believes in Jesus Christ has been saved from their sins because God has already paid the just penalty for their sins in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus was judged in their place. The one that believes stands before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Those who do not Believe. Jesus could have stated this from the more positive, “those who believe will be saved and those who do not believe will not be saved,” but by using the negative He makes a stronger warning. The text states this judgement as a reality. It does not say that those who do not believe “will be judged,” but that “they are already judged.” The perfect tense used here indicates that they have been and remain judged. Jesus does not remove hope of salvation by pronouncing this judgement, but rather brings out the seriousness of refusing to believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. The offer is to “whosoever will,” but why is it that people do not believe? Jesus explains it by showing their response to light.

Responding to the Light (John 3:19-21)

Those Who Hide from It. John 3:19-20, *"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*

Judgement comes because the light causes a separation between itself and darkness. Those who do evil deeds do not want those deeds exposed so they hate the light and will not come into it. They love the darkness because in it they can do their evil deeds without exposure. The very fact that they do not want their deeds to be known condemns them by their own guilty conscience. In addition, their efforts to hide their deeds is foolish for they are not hidden from God. Revelation 20:12-13 tells us that those deeds are written down in God's books and they will be judged and condemned by those very deeds at the Great White Throne judgement.

I have heard people accuse God of not being fair because some are saved and others are not. I praise God that He is not fair, for if He was fair then Jesus would not have died to pay the price of sin and everyone would be condemned without hope. Instead, God is loving, merciful, gracious and just. Those that are judged by God are condemned for their refusal to come to the light of the world, Jesus Christ, and believe in Him. They refuse to come because they love their sin and so reject God's offer of forgiveness in Christ.

Those Who Come to It. Jesus concludes His message to Nicodemus in verse 21. *"But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."*

Those who believe do so because they have a different heart. They desire to come to the light because they strive to practice the truth and they want to see God working in and through them. They want God to be glorified by their deeds. A person must be humble in order to do these things. They must believe that life is about God's glory and not their own. They must see themselves as God's servants and submit to His will and commands. That cannot be done unless there is a change in the human heart. That change begins with humility for *God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5).

This was the answer to Nicodemus' question. *"How could these things be?"* How could a person be born of water and the Spirit? In humility they repent from their sins, that is, they turn from them and agree with God that they were wrong. That is the “born of water.” It is something that any person can do. It is a “fleshy” thing that even the unsaved can do as a response to their guilt. “I was wrong and should not do that any again.”

The person then has to seek the light. They have to love truth and practice it. They have to respond to the report that God has given to us about Jesus, who He is and what He has done and go look upon the Son of Man lifted up. They have to trust in God's mercy and grace which come out of His great love to enable them to believe on the name of the Son of God and be saved. Hebrews 11:6 states *"And without faith it is impossible to please [Him], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."*

If you do not already believe in the name of the Son of God and have that demonstrated by your pursuit of truth, then understand that you cannot save yourself. You cannot earn your way into heaven

through good works because all your good works are as filthy rags before Him (Isaiah 64:6). You can never appease God. God must save you. The good news is that He has made all the provisions to do so. He so loved you that He sent His only begotten Son so that if you believe on Him you should not perish, but have eternal life. You must simply walk in faith that He will fulfill His promises. His promise in Hebrews 11:6 is the starting point for He will reward those who seek Him. You can trust Him that as you do, He will give you faith to believe and follow (Ephesians 2:8).

There is no fence sitting with God. Either you believe and are saved, or you do not believe and you are condemned. Either you love and seek the light, or you hate and reject the light. The offer is to “whosoever will.” What will you do? Today is the day of salvation, and you do not know if you will have tomorrow. We stand ready to help in anyway we can. You cannot control the Holy Spirit, but you can humble yourself before God to repent and seek His mercy and grace.

Sermon Notes - 7/7/2013
The Love of God - John 3:16-21

Introduction (vs. 1-15)

Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a teacher from _____ and came to learn from Him
Jesus answered Nicodemus' question before he asked - you must be _____ to enter God's kingdom
There must be repentance and _____ by the Holy Spirit - and man cannot control the Spirit
Numbers 21: 4-9 - an illustration of faith - believe and _____ God
Salvation from sin based on _____ instead of good works would have been surprising to Nicodemus

God's Love (John 3:16)

The conjunction, "_____", gives the cause for God's plan of redemption - His love
It's Greatness - The adverb, "_____", describes the manner of His love - He gave His son
The tense of "love" takes into account _____ the actions of God's love and views them as one great central fact
We would not know _____ except for God - (1 John 4:7-10, 19)

It's Object. The object of God's love is the world - κόσμος /cosmos - _____

Sinners, Jew & Gentile are the _____ of God's love - Romans 5:8; Luke 5:32; 1 Peter 3:18
Contrary to the view of the Pharisees, _____ is a sinner - Isaiah 53:6; Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:23
God loved us when we were sons of _____ & children of wrath (Eph. 2:2-3) seeking to adopt
People love people who love them, but God loved us when we _____ Him
There is no one who is so sinful that God's love is not _____ to them.

It's Sacrifice - God gave the most valuable and treasured object that exists - His only begotten _____

The nature of the triune Godhead is _____ our ability to understand - we accept it by faith
The "*only begotten Son*," is a _____ reference to the second person of the triune Godhead
Jesus is the greatest gift, the greatest sacrifice and the greatest demonstration of _____ (John 15:13)

It's Offer - "*that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

"Perish" is not _____ - it never means that - it is the contrast that amplifies the gift offered
Belief is an _____ faith of trust in the person and work of Jesus, not intellectual assent
It is a _____ offer which man's natural sinful nature will not accept without divine intervention

God's Purpose (John 3:17)

The Jews were looking for Messiah who would restore the _____ of Israel and punish the Gentiles

Jesus came to save people from their sin and bring Jews and Gentiles together into one group - the _____

God's Judgment (John 3:18)

For those who believe, there is _____ judgment. Paul stated it this way in Romans 8:1

Those who do not believe are already _____ God's judgment

Responding to the Light (John 3:19-21)

Those Who Hide from It (John 3:19-20) do not want their evil deeds _____

Evil deeds are not hidden from God - they are _____ down & will be the basis for judgment - Rev. 20:12f

God is not _____ - He is merciful, gracious, loving and just

Those Who Come to It - (John 3:21) want their _____ manifested as having been wrought in God

There must be a change in the human heart - and that change begins with _____ repentance (1 Peter 5:5)

Faith seeks the truth, believes in the person and work of Jesus & trusts God's _____ of mercy & grace

You _____ earn your way to heaven or appease God by anything you do (Isaiah 64:6)

You cannot control the Holy Spirit, but you can _____ yourself to repent and seek God's mercy and grace

KIDS CORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) How many times does the word "believe" occur in the sermon? 3) Talk with your parents about the meaning of John 3:16 and what it means to "believe in Jesus."

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. Does God love you? How do you know? What is the context of John 3:16? Who is Jesus talking to? What was Jesus explaining to the man? What does verse 16 add to that explanation? What is great about God's love? What is the object of God's love? What is the sacrifice of God's love? What is the significance of "only begotten son?" What is the offer of God's love? What is the condition of that offer? Can you earn your way to heaven? Could this condition be considered "work"? Do you meet that condition? Why did God send Jesus (vs. 17)? How does that differ from what Nicodemus and the other Jews were expecting from the Messiah? God judges some men and not others - what is the basis for this difference? What factor(s) does God judge man upon? What is the nature of those who are judged? How is that nature demonstrated? What is the nature of those that are not judged? How is that nature demonstrated? What nature does your life demonstrate? Verse 14 is critical to understanding the nature of belief called for in the rest of the passage. Write out what you think it means "to believe" in your own words. If you do not meet the condition for salvation, what would need to change so that you could meet the condition? Man cannot control the Holy Spirit, so what can man do in seeking to be "born again"?