

“He Must Increase”
John 3:22-30

Introduction:

1. As Christians:
 - We Are No Strangers To:
 - Controversy!
 - And - This Seems To Be The Case:
 - More Today:
 - Than Ever Before!
 - Of Course - Today - There Are:
 - *Many* Controversies:
 - That *Surround* The Church:
 - Over Issues That Are Important To Us:
 - And Are Addressed:
 - By The Lord Through His Word!
 - This Includes:
 - Controversies Over:
 - Abortion - As We’ve Seen Once Again:
 - Over The Last Couple Of Weeks!
 - As Well As:
 - Controversies Over:
 - Sexuality & Marriage & Race:
 - And - We Could Mention Many Others!
 - But - Even As Christians:
 - Try To Bring God’s Light:
 - Into This Dark World:
 - About These Issues:
2. I’m Sure That:
 - All Of These Controversies:
 - Can Make Us Feel Like:
 - We Are In The Middle Of:
 - A Spiritual Storm!
 - Because - Not Only:
 - Do They:
 - Bring Us Trouble:
 - From Outside The Church!
 - They Can Also Bring That Trouble:
 - Inside The Church!
 - And - In Those Times:
 - The *Worst* Of The Church:
 - Can Often Come Out:
 - Instead Of The *Best*!
 - Because - All Too Often Forget:
 - Who We Are:
 - And - What We Are To Do!
3. Well - As We Return To:
 - John 3 This Morning:
 - After The Great Lesson:
 - That Jesus Gave Nicodemus:
 - We Get A Sense That:
 - There’s Another Storm Of Controversy Brewing!
 - But - This Time:
 - The Storm Is Not:
 - Between Jesus - And:
 - His Enemies! But:
 - Between Jesus - And:

- A Friend! Even:
- His Own Cousin:
- John The Baptist!

4. Because - Starting In:

- 3:22-26 - We Read:

- “After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. / And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. / For John was not yet cast into prison. / Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying. / And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him!”

- In These Verses:

- We Get The Sense That There Is A New Storm And A New:

1. ***Controversy Over Christ!***

- Even The Way Verses 22 & 23 Are Written:

- Gives Us A Sense That:

- There Could Be:

- Potential Competition:

- Between Jesus And His Disciples:

- And - John And His Disciples!

- Because - “After These Things” - That Is:

- After Jesus Had Inaugurated His Public Ministry:

- Through His Miracles & His Teaching:

- Jesus And His Disciples:

- 3:22 - Came - “Into The Land Of Judea; And There He Tarried With Them, And Baptized!”

- So - They Left The Big City:

- Of Jerusalem!

- And Made Their Way Into The Countryside:

- Of Judea!

- So That Jesus Could:

- *Minister* To His Disciples - And:

- *Make More* Disciples!

- What A Special Time:

- This Must Have Been For Those Who Followed Jesus!

- He “Tarried With Them!”

- But - While Jesus Was In The South:

- Of The Country, His Cousin:

- John And His Disciples:

- 3:23 - Were In The North Of The Country:

- “Baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized!”

- Now - In Israel At That Time:

- This Kind Of Competition Was Nothing New!

- There Were Different *Political* Parties:

- Among The Jews!

- There Were Different *Religious* Parties:

- Among The Jews!

- And Now - There Were Two New Groups:

- Joining The Party!

- The Parties Of Jesus & John:

- Though They Were Saying & Doing Pretty Much:

- The Same Things!

- And - Perhaps The Question In The Air:

- Was - Who Will Get:

- The Most Followers?

- Jesus Or John?

- So - From The Average Jew’s Perspective:

- The Stage Was Set:
 - For A Potential Competition:
 - Between Jesus & John!
 - But - That Soon Led To:
- Potential Conflict!
 - Because - Next - In 3:25 - We Are Told That:
 - “Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying!”
 - Now - We Aren’t Sure:
 - What The Specific Question About Purification Was!
 - But - Whatever Was Brought Up During The Debate:
 - It Stirred Up John’s Disciples:
 - To The Point Where:
 - They Had Go To John:
 - And Tell Him Their:
- Potential Concern!
 - As We Read In 3:26 - “And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him!”
 - In Some Way:
 - The Debate Between The Jews & John’s Disciples:
 - Got Around To Jesus - And:
 - They Became Jealous For Their Teacher!
 - They Were Jealous & Concerned:
 - About The Reputation:
 - Of John & His Ministry! After All:
 - It Was John Who “Bore Witness” To Jesus Already!
 - Even As The “Lamb Of God Which Taketh Away The Sin Of The World!” (1:29, 36)
 - But - If Jesus Was Only Doing:
 - What John Was Doing - “Baptizing” - Then - Perhaps They Wondered:
 - About John’s Judgment About Jesus!
 - They Were Also Jealous And Concerned:
 - About The Results:
 - Of John’s Ministry!
 - Because:
 - Jesus Seemed To Be:
 - Getting More Attention:
 - Along with More Followers & Even Greater Results!
 - So - There Was Potential:
 - For Another Religious Turf War:
 - About To Take Place In Israel:
 - Between Jesus & John The Baptist!
 - And - The Disciples Of John:
 - Were Ready For The Fight!
 - To Vindicate Their “Rabbi” - Whom They Honored & Loved!
 - But - This Potential Controversy:
 - Over Christ - Has Not Gone Away:
 - After All These Years!
 - We Still See:
 - Spirits Of Competition & Conflict & Concern - Even Among Friends:
 - That Can Actually Do Harm To The Cause Of Christ:
 - Rather Than To Help!
 - And So - As We Think About:
 - What We Must Do:
 - When We Face Controversy:
 - Whether It Occurs:
 - Outside The Church Or Inside The Church!
 - We Must Listen To:
 - What John The Baptist Then:

- Tells His Disciples!
- And That Is:
- Whenever You Face Controversy:
- You Must Remain:

2. ***Confident In Christ!***

- In 3:27-30 - John The Baptist:
 - Answers His Disciples - To Show Them:
 - That When Christ Is Preeminent:
 - There Doesn't Need To Be:
 - Any Competition!
 - Any Conflict! Or Even:
 - Any Cause For Concern:
 - Among His People!
 - Instead - When There Is Controversy:
 - You Can Remain Confident In Christ:
 - And Experience True Contentment:
 - And Even Courage:
 - Through Christ!
 - Just Listen To John The Baptist's:
 - Response To His Disciples:
 - 3:27-30 - "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. / Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. / He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. / He must increase, but I must decrease!"
 - In Times Of Controversy:
 - These Words Of John:
 - Must Be In Our Hearts!
 - Because - In The Storms Of Controversy:
 - We Need To Maintain Our Confidence:
 - In Christ Himself!
 - And We Can Do So, In The Same Way John The Baptist Did!
 - John Maintained His Confidence In Christ:
 - Through His Hope:
 - In The Truth!
 - Even As We See From 3:27 - "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven!"
 - John Believed In & Had Hope In:
 - The Sovereign Power & Providence Of God!
 - That - *God's* Way Was The *Best* Way:
 - *And* That *God* Would *Have His Way* In This World!
 - 3:27 - "A Man Can Receive Nothing, Except It Be Given Him From Above!"
 - This Is Certainly:
 - A General Truth:
 - About The Providence Of God!
 - Why Are Some Rich & Others Are Poor? Why Are Some Healthy & Others Are Sick? Why Are Some From One Country & Others Are From Another?
 - It Is God's Doing!
 - But Even More - This Is:
 - A Special Truth:
 - About The Plan Of God!
 - It Was God's Plan For:
 - The Ministry Of John To Sunset As The Ministry Of Jesus Arose!
 - It Was God's Plan For:
 - The Ministry Of John To Decrease As The Ministry Of Jesus Increased!

- And - This Hope & Confidence:
 - Gave John The Baptist:
 - Great Contentment & Joy:
 - & Even Courage:
 - As He Continued In His Service For God!
 - Do We Have This Kind Of Confidence?
 - Do We Have This Kind Of Hope?
 - Even When In The Middle Of A Storm Of Controversy?
 - God Is Still On His Throne, God Is Still In Charge, & God Is Still At Work!
- In Times Of Controversy:
 - You Can Remain Confident In Christ:
 - And Experience Contentment & Courage:
 - Through Christ - Just Like John!
- John Also Maintained His Confidence In Christ:
 - Through His Honesty:
 - About The Truth!
 - As We See Next In 3:28 - "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him!"
 - John The Baptist Knew & Understood:
 - The Difference - Between:
 - His Identity & Jesus' Identity!
 - His Role & Christ's Role!
 - His Ministry & The Lord's Ministry!
 - And He Never Forgot The Difference!
 - Back In 1:20 - He Said:
 - "I Am Not The Christ!"
 - Because - That Was *Jesus*' Identity, Role & Mission!
 - Instead - In 1:23 - He Said:
 - "I Am The Voice Of One Crying In The Wilderness, Make Straight The Way Of The Lord!"
 - This Was *His* Identity, Role & Mission!
 - And - John's Testimony:
 - Was Not Only Clear - But:
 - Consistent!
 - And With This Kind Of Honesty & Confidence:
 - In Christ - John the Baptist:
 - Was Content With:
 - Who He Was & What God Called Him To Do!
 - Do You Have This Kind Of Confidence?
 - Do You Have This Kind Of Hope!
 - With *Your* Identity & *Your* Role & *Your* Mission:
 - From The Lord?
 - Sometimes Its Hard To Remember:
 - That To Some - God Gives:
 - The Opportunity:
 - To Plant Seeds!
 - While To Others - God Gives:
 - The Opportunity:
 - To Water The Seeds!
 - But - No Matter What:
 - It Is Still "God That Giveth The Increase!" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)
 - So - In Times Of Controversy:
 - You Must Remain Confident In Christ:
 - To Experience True Contentment & Courage:
 - Through Christ - Just Like John!
- John Also Maintained His Confidence In Christ:
 - Through His Happiness:
 - In The Truth!

- Which Is What We Find In 3:29 - Where John Adds - "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled!"
- When John's Followers Came To Him:
 - It Was In A Spirit Of Jealousy!
 - But - Instead Of:
 - Responding With Jealousy Himself:
 - He Responded With Joy!
 - Instead Of Responding:
 - With Resentment - He Responded:
 - With Rejoicing!
 - Instead Of Responding:
 - With Envy - He Responded:
 - With Excitement!
 - Even As A "Friend Of The Bridegroom!"
 - Or - In Our Day - The "Best Man!"
 - "Rejoices Greatly" Because His Best Friend Is Rejoicing In:
 - The Wife Of His Youth!
 - Now - That Is A True Friend!
- So - With This Proverb:
 - John Told His Disciples That:
 - He Could Not Contain His Excitement:
 - That More People Were Following Christ - Than:
 - Were Following Him!
 - Of Course - There Is Certainly More:
 - To This Proverb Than Just An Expression Of Joy!
 - It Contains Much Truth:
 - About The Work Of Jesus Himself!
 - Jesus Is The Bridegroom! And:
 - His People Are The Bride!
 - And - "From Heaven He Came And Sought Her, To Be His Holy Bride; With His Own Blood He Bought Her, And For Her Life He Died!"
 - To Be Part Of His Bride:
 - You Must Do What Jesus Told:
 - Nicodemus To Do!
 - Believe!
 - Well - This Was The Whole Point:
 - Of John's Ministry As Well!
 - To Prepare The Bride For The Bridegroom!
- But - I Also Think There Is More:
 - To The Joy That John Refers To:
 - In This Verse! When He Says:
 - "This My Joy Therefore Is Fulfilled!"
- Remember When Mary - Jesus' Mother:
 - Went To Meet Elisabeth - John's Mother:
 - When They Were Both With Child?
 - In Luke 1:39-44 - "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; / And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. / And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: / And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. / And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? / For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy!"
- These Words Are No Exaggeration:
 - By Elizabeth! Because:
 - She Was "Filled With The Holy Ghost" - And Was Speaking:
 - Through His Inspiration!
 - The Joy That John Possessed:

- For Jesus - Had Been With Him:
 - From Before He Was Even Born!
 - Even In His Mother's Womb! So:
- Now That Jesus Had Been:
 - Exposed To This World:
 - For Who He Truly Was!
- Now That John Heard For Himself:
 - The "Bridegroom's Voice!"
- His Long-Awaited Joy:
 - Was Finally Fulfilled!
- And - This Happiness & Confidence:
 - In Christ - Made John The Baptist:
 - Even More Content & Courageous:
 - Than He Ever Was!
 - Do You Possess This Kind Of Confidence:
 - In Christ? Do You Possess:
 - This Kind Of Joy & Happiness In Christ?
 - What Gives You The Most:
 - Joy & Happiness In Your Life:
 - Today? Is It Christ?
 - *His* Person?
 - *His* Purpose?
 - *His* Plan?
- 1 Peter 1:8 - "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!"
- In Times Of Controversy:
 - When Your Joy & Confidence Rests In Christ:
 - You Will Enjoy Even More Contentment:
 - Through Christ - Just Like John!
- But Then - John Further Maintained His Confidence In Christ:
 - Through His Humility:
 - Before The Truth!
 - Which Is What We Find In The Unforgettable Words of 3:30 - "He must increase, but I must decrease!"
 - Another Way This Verse Can Be Translated Is:
 - "It Is Necessary For Him To Be Increasing, And For Me To Be Decreasing!"
 - In Other Words - What Was Happening To Both Jesus & John:
 - Was The Will Of God!
 - It Was Absolutely Necessary For This To Happen!
 - Because John Was Only:
 - To *Prepare* The Way!
 - But - Jesus *Was* The Way!
 - And So - "He Must Increase!"
 - John Was Only:
 - A *Messenger On Earth!*
 - But - Jesus Was The *Message From Heaven!*
 - And So - "He Must Increase!"
 - And So - Not Only Was:
 - The Increase Of Jesus:
 - Necessary! It Was:
 - Inevitable!
 - Nothing Could Get In The Way:
 - Of God's Perfect Will!
 - "He Must Increase!"
 - And - Ever Since - He Has Continued:
 - To Increase!
 - Through His Gospel:
 - Preached To The Ends Of The Earth!

- Through His Goodness:
 - Like Rain In The Desert!
- Through His Government:
 - And Rule From Heaven:
 - Which Will Have No End! (Isaiah 9:7)
- And - This Humility & Confidence:
 - In Christ - Brought Even More Contentment & Courage:
 - To John The Baptist:
 - Even As His Ministry Was Nearing Its End!
- Though At This Time:
 - 3:24 - "John was not yet cast into prison!" - He Soon Would Be:
 - And Die As He Had Lived - Preaching:
 - "Repent Ye, For The Kingdom Of Heaven Is At Hand!"
 - Where Did John Get:
 - This Kind Of Courage?
 - Where Did John Get:
 - This Kind Of Contentment?
 - Even In The Middle Of Storms:
 - Of Controversy?
 - Through His Confidence:
 - In Christ!
- Do You Possess This Kind Of Confidence:
 - In Christ? Do You Possess:
 - This Kind Of Humility:
 - Before Christ?
 - Can You Be Content:
 - With The Increase Of Christ:
 - Even If It Means:
 - Your Own Decrease & Even Demise?

Conclusion:

1. This Really Is The Only True Response:
 - That Christians Ought To Have:
 - In Times Of Controversy!
 - It Should Be:
 - More About Christ - And:
 - Less About Me!
2. But - The Reason Why:
 - Controversies Still Get The Better:
 - Of Christians & Churches:
 - Is Because - When We Are In The Middle:
 - Of A Swirling Storm:
 - Like Peter - When He Attempted To Walk To Jesus On The Water!
 - What Happens? What Do We Do?
 - We Take Our Eyes Of Jesus:
 - Just Like Peter Did!
 - And - Instead Of:
 - *Potential* Competition!
 - *Potential* Conflict! And:
 - *Potential* Concern!
 - Those Storms Of Controversy:
 - Bring About - *Actual*:
 - Competition & Conflict & Concern!
 - 3. But What Is The Solution?
 - When You Are Faced With Controversy:
 - Keep Your Confidence In Christ!
 - "He Must Increase!"
 - Only Then - Will You Be Able To:

- Experience Contentment & Courage:
 - Through Christ - Even Though:
 - The Storms Of Controversy:
 - Still Rage Around You!

Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
4245 North 200 West
Greenfield, Indiana 46140
317-326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com