

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

God's Love or the World's Lure

John 3:13-21

¹ Successful fishermen use lures, sometimes quite elaborate ones, to catch fish. They combine these lures with their fishing skills to bring in a catch.

The world's lure for you is the promise of a good life. You're tempted with it all around you. Just tune into the television commercials, your junk mail and email or the street vendors. They promise you a better life if you invest in their product or service. ²

God's way seems too irrational for our modern culture. How can an event more than two thousand years ago have anything to do with you today? How can someone who went through a terrible execution then affect you? It just doesn't make sense! ³

But there are a lot of things that affect your life that don't make sense. Natural laws affect your life every day, but you don't understand them. You just accept them by faith! You don't have to understand everything to benefit from them.

God has given you a choice. You may not understand it, but you must either accept or reject it. ⁴ This scripture helps you to understand so you can make the wisest choice!

God's love or the world's lure. What is it for you? God's word clearly explains this choice. From the Gospel of John, Chapter 3, verses 13 through 21 we read ⁵ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹ ⁶

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ² ⁷

¹ v13-15.

² v16-17.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. ³

Let's compare the three sections of our passage today. ⁸ The first section is found in . . .

³ v18-21.

I. Moses and the Snakes - v13-15

. . . verses 13 through 15; Moses and the snakes. No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 9

Notice God's way in Numbers, Chapter 21, verses 6-9, Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

God brought snakes into the camp to bite Israelites! In verse 7 ¹⁰ the people pleaded with Moses to pray that God would remove the snakes. However, in verse 9 ¹¹ God kept the snakes there but provided a remedy. ¹²

Now, put yourself in the place of an Israelite dying of snake bite! Every move you make is extremely painful. Someone tells you to get up, crawl over to the door of your tent, go outside, find the bronze statue of a snake and then, look at it. You reason to yourself, "How can looking at a bronze snake hanging from a pole cure snakebite?" You decide that's not worth all the pain and effort it would take to do it! That's ridiculous! It's too painful just to move a muscle. So, you die!

But many, however, go through the pain and effort. They look at the snake. Guess what? They live! ¹³ They acted out of faith! God spoke and they obeyed. ¹⁴ God's way, even though it didn't make sense, provided the cure. ¹⁵

The next section is in . . .

II. Jesus and the Cross - v16-17

. . . verses 16 and 17, Jesus and the cross! **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.** ¹⁶

John, Chapter 3, verse 16 is the most favorite and central thought of the whole Bible! ¹⁷ W. C. Scroggie said, "The heart of the Bible is the New Testament. The Book of John is its center, and the third chapter is its vital pulse!" ¹⁸ Peter MacKensie chimes in, "When God loves, He loves a world! When He gives, He gives His best!" ¹⁹

God's way is found in Romans, Chapter 5, verse 12, Romans 5:12 - **Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men . . .** But then, it quickly adds ²⁰ . . . **because all sinned!** ²¹ You must understand that you are separated from God because

of what you did or didn't do. It's not because of what someone else did! You are eternally condemned because of that separation!

Life is not some kind of bookkeeping system. You are not accepted into heaven based upon your good deeds outweighing your bad ones. God demands a perfect life. He demands righteousness, living life the right way with no flaws! Sin results in death regardless of how good a life you think you are living. That's why what comes next in this verse is so important. ²² God gave! Lord Jesus went to the cross for you.

Have you ever thought about what Jesus going to the cross meant to His Heavenly Father? Several years ago I tried to comfort a dad whose toddler aged son ran out into the street and was killed by a passing vehicle. The dad was ridden with guilt for not keeping a closer eye on his son. He was so grief stricken that he could hardly speak. When Lord Jesus hung on the

cross, the Heavenly Father had to turn His back on the whole horrible affair. ⁴ ₂₃

What if there had not been a cross? ²⁴ Your sin would separate you from your Creator forever. ²⁵ You would have no way of obtaining salvation from your sins. You would be without hope. ²⁶ Heaven would be out of reach for you. ²⁷ You would be truly lost!

But the cross offers you a choice! ²⁸ Lord Jesus said, **But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.** ⁵ ₂₉ Because of Calvary you can have a changed life! ³⁰ Because of Golgotha you can have a home in heaven! ³¹ Because of the cross you can have life without end! ³² God's way, even though it doesn't make sense, provides the answer for you!

God's love or the world's lure is a tragic human choice. In verses 13 through 15 with Moses and the snakes, God's way was better. In verses 16 and 17

⁴ Matthew 27:46 - About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" — which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

⁵ John 12:32.

with Jesus and the Cross, God's way is better. ³³ Your choice is found in . . .

III. The Light and the Judgment - v18-21

. . . verses 18 through 21, the light and the judgment. ³⁴ You know, there will be a judgment! The final scene from the movie, "Saving Private Ryan", shows Private James Ryan, now an old man, accompanied by his family, approaching the grave of Captain John Miller at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial at Colleville-sur-mer in Normandy. As they stand reverently in front of the grave of the man who gave his life to save him, Ryan says, "Did I live good enough?" ³⁵

Most people go through life anxiously waiting for the final decision from God, "Did I live a good enough life to get into heaven?" The hope is, in the end, they will be acquitted of their sins. Most of the "Pearly Gate" jokes are based on this. ³⁶

Here is the gospel message, the good news for you. You are lost or saved based upon your relationship with the Lord! In John, Chapter 14, verse 6, Jesus says, **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** The choice you make now determines your acquittal! ³⁷

You know, choosing God is not, primarily, an intellectual decision. It's a moral one! What does this mean? ³⁸ An intellectual choice is a decision based on evidence and logic. ³⁹ But a moral choice is a decision based upon only what you want. When you choose to reject a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus it's because you want to stay in the darkness of this world; not because you can't believe! Here are a couple of examples. ⁴⁰

"I can't accept Christ because of all those hypocrites in the church". Come on now; you run into hypocrites all the time in other settings, but it doesn't stop you from going there. Besides, in moments of weakness,

we all have our hypocritical times. You're not perfect, just redeemed! ⁴¹

"I can't believe because of all those miracles in the Bible. They sound like a bunch of fairy tales!" Stop and think about it. Miracles happen around you every day. Just open your eyes to them! How about metamorphosis? What about childbirth? What about the transformation of a sinner into a saint? Besides, wouldn't you expect a book describing the Creator of the universe to be full of miracles?

Don't be conned into believing that faith has been replaced with science. Some of the most brilliant scholars throughout history in every field of study were committed Christians! ⁴²

Rejecting the Lord is because you want to stay in the world, it's not because you can't believe! When all the smoke is cleared the bottom line becomes apparent; rare it is that you reject the Lord purely because you can't believe. Almost always it's because you don't want to.

Bible teacher William McCarrell related this incident, While Andrew Jackson was President of the United States, a man was given a court trial and condemned to die. President Jackson offered to pardon him, but the condemned man refused the pardon. Prison authorities, the Attorney General of the United States, and others earnestly endeavored to convince the man to accept the pardon. They tried to impress upon him that it would not only spare his life, but that if he did not accept the pardon, it would be an insult to the President. The man persisted. The Attorney General consulted the Supreme Court asking whether legal authorities could not force the man to receive the pardon. The court ruled that the pardon was merely a printed statement until the man accepted it. If he rejected the pardon, it remained printed matter." ⁶ 43

You must make a choice about God. You cannot live a good enough life to earn a life in heaven with God forever. So Lord Jesus went to the cross where He

⁶ "You Must Accept It", Our Daily Bread, September 24.

suffered and died. By doing this, God offered you a pardon, a free gift. Forgiveness for your sins was made available on the cross. But you must accept it to be pardoned! ⁴⁴

Take the remedy for your sinful condition. Discover the life God has available to you. Don't put it off!

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