

A Heavenly Cure - John 3:10-15

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[0:00] Hey guys, thanks for listening to our Calvary Chapel Charlotte podcast.! I will walk by faith and not by sight.

Good morning, everybody. If you want to turn to John chapter 3, speaking of the Word, we will be doing verses 10 through 15 today, Lord willing, and then next week we'll finish up the remaining section of the words of Jesus here to Nicodemus.

But this week, 10 through 15, if you remember our outline, it's in your bulletin. I had to condense it kind of to fit in there, but we're looking at John 3 is transformation, where Nicodemus comes to Jesus and he's recognizing something in Jesus that he doesn't have that Jesus has.

I mean, this is the guy in Israel, Nicodemus. It's the teacher, it's the one who should handle and understand everything regarding God and his Word from what they felt they could know at that time. And yet, here you have Jesus who comes and he has just cleansed the temple, if you remember. He turned over the money changer's tables and cast out the animals. So Nicodemus comes to him at night and he says, hey, we know who you are. We know you're from God. We can tell just by how you are from this outward appearance, from the acts that you're doing.

[1:55] And so he essentially said verses one through two is Nicodemus, he's stating the obvious, which is there's no inward reality that man has with God. Nicodemus is saying, well, Jesus, you're just like us. You know, we do good things for God.

You do good things for God. We're called to be God's people. You must be God's person. But what he realizes is, man, he's stating the obvious that there's nothing, Jesus, I don't have what you have. So Jesus then says, hey, transformation is required to see God. You claim that I'm from God because of what you're judging from natural appearance. There's something more that's required. And Nicodemus, you don't have it.

And so Nicodemus in verse four, he wants to know essentially, how can that be? How can I undo sin? If I'm, if I'm, you say I must be born again, Jesus. Well, how am I going to do that? How am I going to go back into my mother's womb now that I'm old?

Even if I did, I'm still going to be the same guy. I'm still going to be born into the same nature. How can we turn the clock back essentially on sin? So Jesus, who has asserted transformation is needed to see God.

[2:55] He then explains the transformation is apart from sin. It's something that takes place apart from the sin nature. It's something that does not involve, in a sense, the natural man.

Nicodemus should have known these things we read in verse 10. And Nicodemus, you should know that no matter how good man is, he will never rise to the level of the spiritual. Because that which is born of flesh is flesh.

And that which is born of spirit is spirit. No matter how high the flesh rises, it will never rise into the spiritual. Nicodemus asks, how is that transformation possible?

Okay, Jesus, you assert it's required to see God. You explain that it's possible that I can obtain this despite my sin nature. How? How?

How do I get that? I want to be born again. I want to receive that. How? And that's verses 10 through 15 where we are today. Jesus will explain how inward transformation can be obtained.

[3:56] But he had said in verse 10, and that's where we're going to back up a little bit into verse 10 here, where he had said to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, you should have known these things. Your acceptance before God is based on what?

Who he was and what he did. Well, this is who I am. I've got the plaque on the wall that says so. I've got the years of studying that says so. This is who I am and this is what I do. And so I must be accepted by God.

But life with God must begin by spiritual transformation. It cannot begin with something that I generate myself, right?

He loves us. We love him, I mean, because he first loved us. He's the initiator. And so we saw that acceptance with God is based upon spiritual transformation and cleansing.

As we read the prophecy fulfilled of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36, 26. A new heart also will I give you. A new spirit will I put within you. And I'll take away the stony heart out of your flesh.

[4:58] And I'll give you a heart of flesh. Now we've been talking about that which is born of flesh is flesh. And we're saying, well, Jesus promises to give us a heart of flesh. It's like, well, what is going on here? It's talking about a stony heart, meaning a dead heart.

The heart of flesh there in the Hebrew is a living heart. Jesus' death removes the stony heart. It removes sin. His resurrection gives us a new source of life.

A heart, a living heart. And so he called that what? A new birth. A new birth means a new life. It means a new person. It means a brand new arrival.

It means something never experienced before for that person partaking of that birth. And then Jesus turns to Nicodemus and says, Nicodemus, after he asks him and says, how can these things be in verse nine?

Jesus said, you should know these things, Nicodemus. You should have known this. You should have known that there's no inward reality apart from a work that God does within you.

[5:56] You should have known that sin, the barrier between you and God, is not something that you can take care of in your own because you're born into sin. You should have known that, Nicodemus. You should have known, Nicodemus, that a heavenly cure is needed.

That's what we're going to look at today as we get through verses 10 through 15. We're going to see Jesus is going to show us, yes, inward transformation. It's possible. It's obtainable because there is a heavenly cure.

So Jesus, in verse 10, answered and said unto him, are you a master? Are you a teacher? Are you the guy, the teacher, the authority of Israel? And you don't know these things.

What things? That a spiritual life must have a spiritual origin. You should know that, Nicodemus. A spiritual life must have a spiritual origin.

Philippians 3.3. We, speaking of the church, are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

[6:56] No confidence in the flesh. What is Nicodemus and Israel at that time, and I would say Israel at this time, what is their confidence? Well, in the flesh and who they are according to their nature, their natural ethnic heritage.

We are not those. We have no confidence in the flesh. We need a circumcision of what? Of the heart. You know, in the Old Testament, it will say, God will say to Israel many times, circumcise your heart.

Meaning, remove the covering from your heart. But guess what they couldn't do permanently on their own? Man, guys, you can go in and you can try and clean that heart. You can try and remove the things from your life. God, I'm going to get this out of my heart.

But it's going to come back again and again and again. Unless there is something that God does by giving us a new heart. So Israel, God's chosen people of the flesh, they were expected to understand the need for a spiritual life.

They could be 100% confident they were God's chosen people. Chosen for a special purpose, a special plan. But that choice did not guarantee spiritual acceptance with God.

[8:04] Chosen by God does not mean spiritually accepted by God. That's the whole point in Romans 9, where Paul says, hey, look it, God chose Pharaoh and used him for a purpose. Cannot the potter use the lump of clay how he wants to?

Israel and unbelief, cannot God still use them in that way? But hey, don't think that just because God's using you, that he's accepted you. There's two different things.

God used Cyrus. God used Nebuchadnezzar. God can use many. He can choose and he can use anything. So why then? Why stand with Israel?

Why support Israel? We talked about this the other week, saying, hey, we stand with Israel and we talked with Iran. What does that mean? It means that we stand with them because they're a people in belief? Because they're spiritually renewed?

No, they're not. The Bible says that the veil is over their eyes. That they are, blindness in part has happened to Israel. Was it because they only make good decisions? Absolutely not. They're a secular nation and I don't agree with all their decisions.

[9:04] Even those within the nation that are Orthodox Jews, they're just like Nicodemus thinking, well, am I standing with God? It's based on the fact that God chose me.

God chose us as a people to be his special people in this earth. So why do we stand with them? For the simple fact that God stands with Israel.

We stand. I stand. This church, as a ministry, stands with Israel for the simple fact that God stands with them. Zechariah 2.8. For he that touches you, Israel, touches the apple of my eye.

Psalms 122.6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee. One of my favorite scriptures. To add to my list, it was about 80. Jeremiah 31.36.

If this fixed order departs from before me, what fixed order? The fixed order of creation. The sun, the moon, the stars, the day, the night, the waves. Every time you go to the ocean and you see the waves, know that the seas of this world will never be perfectly calm.

[10:08] Because if they are, God says, hey, if those fixed orders depart from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.

Has God cast off Israel? No, he is not. He's not. God forbid, Paul says. They're his people. He says, I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham of the tribe of Benjamin.

His heritage. His national, natural heritage. God has not cast away his people, which he foreknew. So we do not stand with Israel because of their spiritual standing with God.

Jesus, all through the Gospels, claims them as Jews, God's people, the children of Abraham. He says, we're going to see in chapter four, he says, when he speaks to the woman at the well, he says, we know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews.

So we don't stand with them because of their spiritual standing with God. But because a spiritual God has chosen them to stand. He said, they will stand. Moses in Deuteronomy.

[11:14] We're going to be in Numbers 21 for a bit today. And they're wandering through the wilderness. And Moses will eventually in Deuteronomy get to this point where he gives this sermon to them. He says, for you are a holy people unto the Lord your God.

The Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. Israel is God's chosen people in the earth. The church is God's spiritually chosen people out of the earth.

Above all the people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because you are more in number than any people. For you are the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you.

Because he would keep the oath which he had sworn to your fathers. If you read the Old Testament, 90% of the time Israel is in rebellion and unbelief. And God says, yes. But my unconditional promise to Israel, or God's unconditional promise to Israel, was not that they would by default become his spiritual people.

That is the mistake Nicodemus is making right now. Well, hey, if we're your chosen people, Moses said it. That you're your special people above all the people that are upon the earth.

[12:29] Well, therefore, by default, we must be your spiritual people too. So, his unconditional promise was that he would unconditionally be their God and own them as his people.

Despite their unbelief. He says, hey, I will own you as my people and I will be your God. Because Israel exists for God's purpose and his glory. So, well, that's interesting.

We don't have to worry about that. Right? I can't claim, like, well, God chose me because of my national heritage. You know, there's a couple of us in this room that are Polish. So, obviously, that's, you know, no. Or, well, hey, I'm Italian. Or, hey, it's not why God picked me. Right? But we can be in danger of the same thing. We who have been spiritually renewed, spiritually regenerated, born again, we can do the same thing. We can think our standing with God has something to do with what is innate within me. Like, well, God, I see why you picked me. I see why you saved me.

[13:34] Look what you're doing with my life. Look how you could use me. Makes sense now, God. You know, of course you wanted to save me. We can do the same thing. We can think because of the work God's done in our life, the way we've responded to him, how he has chosen us and using us, we can say that somehow that gives us footing with God.

We can be just like Israel. Well, I, my family was, I was raised a Christian and my parents were Christian. I've been in this church for generations. Well, not this one. We've only been here three years. Right?

We can do the same thing. We can think somehow because of that, God is more or less pleased with me. Paul would say what to the Galatians in chapter three? Oh, you foolish Galatians.

Who has bewitched you? They should not obey the truth. Are you so foolish having begun in the spirit? Are you now perfected, completed, brought to completion and wholeness by your flesh? Anyone claim to have anything really beneficial? Their fleshly nature is done for them spiritually? No. Well, yes, because the only thing that recommends me to God is my sin and his grace.

[14:45] That's the only footing that I have. The only thing that recommends me to God is my sin. Are you a sinner? Well, then Jesus says, that's why I came. I did not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners.

Praise God for his faithfulness to unfaithful Israel. Praise God to his faithfulness to unfaithful me. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision.

Nothing we can do in the flesh gives a spiritual standing before God, but faith, which works by love. So Jesus, I think he's saying this to Nicodemus, and I think we should own this and not just put this on Nicodemus and not just put it on, well, that person's religious or that person's just trying their own effort.

We need to own this and realize, God, I do the same thing. I do the same thing. I think, Lord, look at what you've done in my life, and I take credit for it. I think that somehow validates me before God. And Jesus says in verse 11, truly, truly, I say unto you, Nicodemus, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen and you receive not our witness.

[15:51] Remember, he's just told him you must be born again. He said, hey, as the wind blows where it wills, you don't know where it's coming from. So is anyone who's born after the spirit. He said, we speak what we know and testify what we've seen and you receive not our witness.

And you think, well, either Jesus has gone a little cuckoo or maybe there's a misprint here. Who's we? It's Jesus. It's Nicodemus. Who's the other party? Jesus declares that there are other voices besides his that speaks truth.

John 16, 13 says, speaking of the spirit, how be it when he, the spirit of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.

He will show you things to come. So there's another voice, another voice. Nicodemus, can you see that voice? No. Well, who can you see? We can see Jesus. John 14, 10, Jesus would speak of the father and say, believest thou not that I'm in the father and the father in me?

The words that I speak unto you, I don't speak them of myself. I'm not just making these up. But the father that dwells in me, he does the work. You know, I was praying and I was like, Lord, how did you do it?

[17:03] You had Judas with you. How did you do that? How did you? You had all these people who said, you're crazy. You don't know anything you're talking about. How did you do it?

What is that heart? What is that type of fortitude? I want that. And it was like the thought came. I believe it was the spirit speaking. I don't know. The wind just blew. I don't know how it does. And it was like, because I had my father, because I had his words and I had his support and I had his direction.

That was all that I needed. I had my father. We can always trust that Jesus knows what he's saying. He does. He says to Nicodemus, truly, truly, I'm going to tell you stuff.

You can trust what I'm saying. We can be assured that the things of the spirit, they are all known and understood by Jesus. I don't understand them all. As we were told, that the wind blows where it wills.

I don't know where it's going. I don't know its purpose. I don't know where it's come from. I don't know why it's doing it. I can see the effect. I can see that in your lives. Say, man, God is moving in your life. Sometimes it's like, oh, it's a gentle breeze.

[18:10] Other times it's like, you're just kind of like holding on. Like, oh, my word. And it's like, yeah, I can see that in your life, too. God's moving. John 33, 31 and 32.

This is, we will get there in two weeks, Lord willing. This is where John the Baptist is speaking of Jesus. And he says, he that comes from above is above all.

He that is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. That which is born of flesh is flesh. And that which is born of spirit is spirit. He that comes from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard that he testifies.

And no man receives his testimony. Why not? Because they don't have ears to hear. Because they're looking with natural perception. Like Nicodemus. Nicodemus thought he was able to see and understand who Jesus was.

So I got you pegged, Jesus. But he could only comprehend the part of Jesus that his natural perception grasped. See, I know who Jesus is.

[19:14] He's a good teacher. He came from God. He does good works. We should emulate him in our lives. All he could see of Jesus was what his natural perception and abilities were able to comprehend and grasp.

The issue then for Nicodemus, it's not whether he understands, because he doesn't. The issue is, will he receive from the one who does?

Nicodemus is like, I don't get it. And Jesus is like, I know, but I do. And I got other voices backing it up. I keep going back to this, but all I think of is with Thomas. Where he came and he's like, I'm not going to believe unless there's evidence.

He didn't see the evidence. Did that mean it wasn't true? No, it was still true. It was all true. He just wouldn't believe without the evidence. But it's all still there.

How much better if he had said, you know what? I don't understand it, but I'm going to accept it because it comes from Jesus. Remember, we saw in verse 11 of chapter one that he came to his own and his own did what? They received him not.

[20:13] They wouldn't receive him. Receive is to take with the hand. So here he says to Nicodemus, or yeah, truly, truly, I say unto you, we speak that we do know and testify what we've seen and you will not receive our witness.

You won't grab a hold of it with your hand. I can entrust into Jesus's hands what I do not understand. I can trust his hands. I can put it in his hands.

God, I don't understand this. I don't know why you're doing this in my life. Makes no sense. But what does he say to receive? Receive from him what? You should receive understanding from me. Well, we will. That comes. Receive our witness. Receive the truth from Jesus and lay hold of it. I do not need to understand all of Jesus's words to trust what Jesus says.

And if you wait to understand all of Jesus's words to trust what he says, you're never going to trust him. Because we're not going to understand them all. Not this side of eternity.

[21:14] And even then, when we are face to face with him, I think all eternity is going to be like, now, can we go back to this? Remember, remember in the, you know, in Revelation 21, it's the new heavens and the new earth, right?

Wherein dwells righteousness. Remember the old heavens and the old earth? Remember that old earth? And you said this on it. Can we talk about what that means? Heaven and earth will pass away, but his word will remain.

What does that mean? He's the word made flesh, dwelt among us. What does that mean that's of this? That'll somehow apply in that new heavens and new earth. I don't know.

I just like to blow my own mind thinking about it. Will these scriptures have a relevance? Jesus will have relevance. Well, but his words, which will never pass away, will we be in a new earth and having our minds blown by Jesus saying, hey, remember I said that?

Let me show you something else. I don't need to understand all of his words to trust what he says. In John 7, Jesus will say, my doctrine, my teaching, the things that I'm telling you, they're not mine. [22:18] I'm not making him up, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, the will of the one who sent him, his father, he shall know of the doctrine.

He'll know the things that I teach, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself. Understanding will come, but understanding isn't first. If any man will do his will, he shall know his doctrine.

I would like it to say, if any man will understand his doctrine, he'll do his will. But it doesn't say that. If any man will do his will, it says we walk in obedience to Jesus, the leading of his spirit, doing what we do know about him.

Boy, then more understanding comes. Oswald Chambers will say that the key to understanding is obedience, not more study.

Should we study the word? Yes, absolutely. But if we're not doers, then we're not going to understand. We can always trust that Jesus knows what he's saying.

[23:16] So he says to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, I know you're sitting there looking at me like, what are you talking about? But if I've told you earthly things and you do not believe, how should you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

What are earthly things? Well, earthly things are things that are naturally understood. We perceive them through the way we interface with this world.

They're of the nature of the flesh. They come from this created fallen nature. They're familiar. They're comfortable. It's what I live my everyday life in. But they're meant to point to something greater.

Jesus says, listen, if you can't understand the purpose and point of these earthly things, how are you going to believe when I begin to tell you things of heaven that have no earthly anchor, earthly viewpoint?

The heavens declare the glory of God, says Psalm 19, and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utter speech and night unto night shows knowledge.

[24:15] The heavens declare the glory of God. Romans 1.20 says the invisible things of God, of creation, are understood by the things which we can see. We should understand the unseen behind the things we see.

Can man do the type of engineering and design that God has put into creation? No way. Not a chance. We should see that we're without excuse, it says.

So, if we don't believe that the natural points to the spiritual, then how can we believe spiritual truth that have no natural aid? If I can't believe that, hey, I can look at the wind and be like, you know, that's how God moves in my life by his spirit.

Just like that leaf blowing along, right? I like to be kind of the leaf that's like, Lord, if I could just get caught up in like the jet stream. I'm just always going one direction. That's really good.

Keep it. Let's just go that way. You know, there's other people that like to just kind of float along through life. It's like, what are they doing? I don't know. But at least I have something to anchor that in.

[25:22] I have something I can anchor in when I think, you know, as I continue in fellowship with the body of believers, man, I'm so enriched and God enriches my life and I can see how God works through the body to provide need and care.

I have something that has a natural aid, an anchor point to my faith. But what happens when there is none? What happens when I hear, as it says in Isaiah, that voice behind me saying, go to the left

or go to the right.

And I have nothing in this world that anchors me to that decision other than God's showing me to do this. John 5, 37 through 38.

And the father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. But you've neither heard his voice at any time, nor have you seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you.

For whom he has sent him, you believe not. So how do I see those spiritual things that have no natural vantage point? I do it through his word.

[26:24] If his word abides in me, it allows me to see essentially behind the scenes. I can see that it's the father doing it. But he says, listen, you don't see him. You don't hear his voice. The word is our source of heavenly things.

If we're not going to believe the word, we won't receive heavenly things. If we always have to have, have to be able to see it, to understand it, to have it anchored in this world, to have it anchored in my mind and understanding, to have it anchored in something that I can hold on to.

I have to see the hands. I have to see the side. Now, am I talking about having blind faith? Well, you should just blindly believe. Not at all.

Not at all. Should you blindly believe Jesus? I would say yes. Can you blindly believe Jesus? You can.

When you get to know Jesus. Yes. But I'm not talking about something we just jump into and like, we have no idea what's going on. No, I'm saying when you get to know who God is, I can trust him.

[27:25] You know, when your kids are little, you have little kids or you've been around little kids. You know, I think of Henry, my son. I'm not going to embarrass him too much. This is when he's much, much, much, much younger. Right? But he's got three older sisters.

So we always have said he just kind of lived in his own world, like at his own level. He just did his own thing. And every once in a while, he would kind of pop up into the rest of our world. And then he'd go back down and just do his own thing. But he had three sisters.

So he just kind of had to. But that kid, when he was little, and he still lives a very secure life. But when he was little, I mean, you could just tell. This kid knew where he was getting fed. He knew where to get comfort.

He had the whole thing down. You know, the youngest of four and three sisters. He wasn't concerned. Man, I hope dad doesn't lose his job. I wonder how we're going to eat tonight. Oh, no. He just knew the animal crackers were in the cupboard. He didn't know how they got there. They were just there. Love you, Henry. And that's the same, right?

[28:19] He didn't have to have understanding because he trusted, because he knew. So it's the same. I can trust my father. I don't have understanding, but I can trust him. No man, verse 13, Jesus said, has ascended up to heaven.

No man, Nicodemus, no natural can attain to the spiritual. No man has ascended to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man, which is in heaven.

Jesus is stating that he knows of heavenly things. Because he came from there, he's going to go back there. And he's saying to Nicodemus, and I'm currently there.

What is heaven? Ascend to heaven. We think of going up. What if you live in Australia? Are you going down? And once you get outside of the gravitational pull of the earth, which weighs up?

It's just figuratively talking about the direction from this life, right? Up to God, down, away from him. But heaven is not primarily a place, is it?

[29:23] If you got to heaven and there's a little sign that said, you know, Jesus, be back soon. He wasn't there. It'd be kind of disappointing. Heaven's not primarily a place.

It's a person. Heaven is Jesus. It's think, you know, it wasn't planned, but that line in that song, you know, you brought heaven down. Heaven's not on earth in the sense that Jesus is making this old earth heaven.

But where Jesus is, is heaven. He is that. And so Jesus is stating the fact that, hey, I know because I've been there. I'm going back there. And Nicodemus, do you understand that where I am is heaven?

The only man, the only man, fully God and fully man is Jesus. The only man to ever ascend to heaven of his own accord and his own merit. It wasn't natural.

It wasn't because of his natural prowess. He was not a Nicodemus, but he was a man who had what type of origin? A heavenly origin, a spiritual origin.

[30:24] He had nothing natural to recommend him. What does Isaiah 53 to say? He will grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness. And we shall see him. There's nothing in him that we should desire him. There's nothing you're going to look at Jesus and go, wow.

I knew he wore that white robe and blue sash. I knew it. I know he glowed. I knew it. I could tell. There's nothing in the natural. The only man to ever ascend to heaven had nothing natural to recommend him.

Nothing of this nature. And for us, no matter how high a man may rise, the man that's born of flesh is flesh and will never rise above flesh.

Flesh cannot arise. It cannot ascend into that which is spiritual. Despite what the religions of the world say, despite what the people of this world say, what does the flesh need? It needs transformation.

[31:24] It needs transformation. It needs transformation. But though we cannot rise into the spiritual, what can we do? We can arise in Christ.

Jesus says in John chapter five, marvel not at this. For the hour is coming and the watch all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and shall come forth. They that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil under the resurrection of damnation.

What does God consider good in his eyes? What is the deed that he says that is a good thing? Well, verse 15, whoever believes on him should not perish.

What is the work? What is the good work of God that we must do? The disciples asked Jesus believe. Yes, we will arise in Christ to a place that we could never rise to in our own efforts.

Jesus became the son of man so we could become the sons of God. And he has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus.

[32:32] And I can't, I can't claim that for myself, my own efforts. I can't put myself where Nicodemus was where I need to be careful not to put myself there. Say, well, obviously it's because I've got a lot to offer God.

You know, we've done pretty well together, Jesus, you and I, I've responded to your spirit and your call and I've by faith obeyed and we've done a good job, haven't we? No, I'm, I have standing with God.

I sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, nothing but Christ Jesus. The natural cannot attain to the spiritual, but it can be transformed, be metamorphosed.

It can be made into something new. Any man being Christ is a new creation and those old things are passed away. All things have become new. Says Nicodemus, I'm going to give you an object lesson because I can tell like from the, your eyes going all cuckoo that the stuff I'm trying to speak to you from heaven is just, you're not getting it right now.

But as the Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up. If you would turn back to numbers 21 with me, because to know how the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness and that Jesus, the son of man must be lifted up in the same way.

[33:53] Well, we're going to have to go back and look at where the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. Transformation. It's possible. It's attainable. In Luke 24, remember Jesus is walking on the road to Emmaus and he's with the two disciples.

And then it says, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. Expounded means to unfold. He unfolded to them all the things in the scriptures that touched himself, that were about himself.

The things that were valid, real events in the lives of God's chosen people, Israel. Jesus said, they pointed to me and I want you to see how they did that.

Unfold. You know, I think of like, um, if you're reading a book or something, a page is stuck together, right? You turn the page and then you come back and you realize, oh, it's stuck together.

And you open it and like, oh my word, there's all this other stuff.

Now, the difference is that with Jesus, you know, with God's word, as you're reading it, you're not going to miss anything. There's no pages stuck together. It's unfolding. It's more like a map, right? The way that, well, I don't know how many of you used to use maps and some of you don't even know how those even work anymore.

[35:01] They kind of folded like an accordion, right? And you can never fold them back up the same once you got it out in the car. Um, they also caused a lot of strife in your marriage. GPSs were amazing. You're not reading that right.

I know what I'm reading. Watch the road. But it's more like you're looking at the map and like you, then you unfold and you unfold and you unfold and you unfold. And there's just so much more. So Jesus will unfold.

You see, all scriptures derived from what? One source. He is the word made flesh. So all scripture points back to that source. But it does so in a non-destructive way.

What do I mean by that? I mean that scripture will never contradict or overwrite itself. While we look to the Old Testament through the lens and filter of the New Testament, it unfolds.

It doesn't overwrite, doesn't contradict. God is not a God who writes retractions. Well, this is what I meant. But I just didn't say it. But now this is what I meant. Jesus in Matthew 5, he says, Think not that I've come to destroy the law or the prophets.

[36:04] I'm not come to destroy, but to fulfill means render perfect or complete. For truly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass means to be carried away. One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass be carried away from the law.

The jot and the tittle is like the smallest piece of the law. The little punctuation marks and spaces. They will not be carried away. Until what? Until all be fulfilled.

Until all be rendered perfect or complete. Did Jesus come to do away with the law? He did not. He rendered it complete. But is the law of God still here? Are the Ten Commandments valid in your life?

They are. The difference is, it's now written on my heart. And that is not the basis of my standing before God. But Jesus completes it and that I don't have to attain it. I don't have to try and keep all Ten Commandments to be right with God.

Jesus fulfilled, completed it. But he said the law won't pass away. The validity of God's standards do not pass away till heaven and earth pass away. So God doesn't write retractions.

[37:06] But he does allow us to see his plan of Jesus unfold as we go back and look at the Old Testament. Numbers 21, we're going to pick up in verse 4.

Israel has been wandering in the wilderness. They have come to the border of Jordan. And they said, no, we don't understand God. We're not going into promise. We don't understand how this is going to work. So we're not going to believe your words.

We're not going to trust you. We're not going to follow. And they don't go in. In verse 4, they're traveling along the Red Sea. They're coming up around by the way of Edom. Edom is Esau.

It's the land he was given. It says in verse 4, they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea to compass the land of Edom. And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

Discouraged, interesting word, means to grow short. Don't be discouraged, short people. That's not what it means. It also means reap a harvest.

[38:01] So it's like to cut short. It's cut short. That discouragement is the type of thing that I just can't take it anymore. Instead of waiting this out and trusting that God has a plan in this.

Well, now I've cut short. I'm grown short. And the people, they grew impatient with this journey. But whose fault was it? It was a journey of their own making.

And the people, verse 5, spake against God and against Moses and said, Wherefore have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? This is like the country western song they played all 40 years in the wilderness.

Where did you? I won't sing it. Wherefore you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there's no bread. Now there's any water. And our soul loathes.

What? This light bread. You know what happened in the chapter before Numbers 21? They complained there's no water. And that's when Moses the second time strikes the rock and he should have spoken to it.

[39:00] So they've just given a ton of water. And they say there's no bread. Well, there is bread. We don't like it. Discouragement causes short-sightedness. Small souls are never satisfied no matter how big the blessing.

And these guys, they just wouldn't receive the fact that God was caring for them and providing for them. Light bread doesn't just mean it's like, you know, I don't want anything heavy. You make something light for me. The word literally means worthless.

This worthless bread. It's light. It has no substance that we even care about. Their soul loathes this light bread as it's grieved. It's sickened. This worthless bread makes us sick.

There's no bread and there's no water. There was not a lack of bread and water. But there's a lack of accepting the bread and water that God provided. He would not receive it.

So discouragement wasn't because of their circumstances. It wasn't because of the way they were in. It was because of their souls. Their souls could not see God's provision.

[40:01] Could not see God's faithfulness. They could not see God's heart. Israel spoke against a gracious God who is actively leading, feeding, and caring for his people.

You know, at the edge of the Jordan to go into the promised land and they rejected him, he could have been like, all right, poof, done with you.

For 40 years, he's going to care for them as they in unbelief and rebellion will not enter into promise. How's that any different than Israel today?

In rebellion and unbelief, they won't enter into promise. And God cares for his people. He's not done with them. He says, I have a plan. Why does he allow this?

Why is he wanting with these people? Because he says in Deuteronomy 8, 2, you remember all the way which the Lord your God led you. 40 years in the wilderness to humble you, to prove you, to know what was in your heart.

[41:02] Whether you would keep his commandments or not. God's not just trying to drag them around and ruin their lives. God doesn't want them discouraged. What he wants is their hearts and he'll do what it takes to get them.

And so they grumble. They complain against Moses and the Lord in verse 6. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people and much people of Israel died. There's like everything in that verse I don't ever want to experience.

Like, that's just terrible. Fiery serpent. Just means a poisonous snake. That which injects venom. That which brings death has been sent among the people.

The serpents bite. It brought pain. It brought poison. And it brought passing. And the saddest part about this verse is that much people died before any people sought the Lord.

It's only in the next scripture we see. Therefore, the people came to Moses and said, we've sent much people died before anyone. Before any people said, hey, maybe we should go and seek the Lord. You see, discouragement blinds us to what really matters.

[42:12] People are dying. Hey, mom. Timmy's got bit and he's swollen. Look, I'm trying to figure out how to get this Instacart to work. We need some bread. You know, we'll deal with that later. It blinds us from what really matters.

Makes us think the most important thing is to satisfy our flesh. To satisfy our natural perception. Therefore, verse 7, the people came to Moses and said, we've sinned.

Yes. For we spoke against the Lord and against you. Where is their whole view and perception?

Outward. They're not worried about their heart. If only we hadn't said something to upset God.

If only we didn't say it out loud. That's what it was. We spoke out. They spoke out what they were living out. Because rebellious words come from where? Rebellious heart.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. But praise God. They knew where to go to have the pain and poison removed. Praise the Lord. They turned.

[43:10] And Nicodemus knew where to go. And Jesus said those hard things. He didn't say, you know, I'm out of here. No, he said, how can these things be? I want to understand Jesus. I don't know where else to go.

The people recognized their situation was deadly and desperate. And so Moses, he takes them to the Lord in praise. And remarkably, no matter how terrible the people act, no matter how upset Moses gets, I just cannot believe all through Exodus.

And then as you go through Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, he always intercedes for the people. He never goes, I don't feel like it. He'll go sometimes and be like, Lord, I don't like them. They're your people. But he always intercedes. The people knew that only God could remove the serpent from their lives. And verse 8, the Lord said to Moses, Moses, make a fiery serpent. So the people have said, please pray to God. He takes the serpents from us. Moses, make a poisonous serpent. And set it up upon a pole. And shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, he shall live.

[44:17] God's deliverance comes according to God's word. It's God's word that speaks deliverance. It's God's word that spoke deliverance that the people needed. Participation in that deliverance.

What does that hang on? How I will respond to God's word. No, I don't believe it. I'm not going to make the serpent and put it on the pole. Or for many of the people. I don't believe it.

I'm not going to look at that. Moses was not told to kill a serpent and put it on the pole. Don't go put the serpent on the pole.

We're going to hang the serpent on the pole. No, make something that represents the source of venom and death, but did not actually contain the venom and death itself. Second Corinthians 5:21, for he made him, Jesus, to be sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Did he hang sin on the cross? Did he put the serpent on the cross? No, he put the one who represented the venom and death, but did not actually contain it himself. He says, Moses, make a serpent and put it on a pole.

[45:24] Now, it could have been a pole. And I'm sure you've seen that. It's still in our modern medical industry today. The pole with a serpent around it. It could be. But Moses, we're going to see here, he makes this thing of brass.

Brass has to be cast. So you have to melt it down to get it molten, and then you have to put it in a mold and cast it. And that'd be kind of difficult to make it so it's going around the pole like that. But the word here, pole, it could be pole, but it means ensign or standard.

You know what a standard bearer is? You know, like someone, well, we don't really have that type of combat anymore, but when you had hand-to-hand, on-foot combat, you would have those that would carry the standard, and they would go before you.

If you go online today and you put in a flag standard bearer or whatever, you want to get a standard, you can buy this one. It looks like that. So perhaps Moses used that kind of standard, and he put upon it that which represented the venom and the death.

Perhaps it was easier just to hang the serpent. I would think if you want to do it quickly across that, than to try and figure out how to get him around a pole.

[46:31] But what did God not do for the people? God did not remove the serpent, but he did provide a cure. In our lives, God has not removed the serpent.

I wish he had, but he has provided a cure. What was that cure? A look. A look meant life. John 3, 15.

The whosoever believes in him should not perish, shall not be cast away as worthless, but shall have everlasting, eternal life. Those that had experienced the bite, the pain, and the venom of the serpent, they were given an antidote.

And Moses, in verse 9, made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole. Brass. It represents judgment, but it means it's already taken place. It's not to be judged. It has been judged.

It represents this has been judged. And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent, he lived. The brass.

[47:32] The problem had already been dealt with. The solution was on full display for anybody who wanted it. Colossians 2, 14 and 15 tells us that the blotting, that he blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to that pole, nailing it to his cross.

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them, openly, openly triumphing over them in it. He has triumphed over the serpent, but he did not remove him.

A look brought life. A look at judgment upon the pole. It would bring healing. It would bring renewal. It would bring life.

And that cure was not affected by how bad the bite was in your life. Where you were bitten, where did it bite you? I can't show you. How often you were bitten? I was on my way to look at the pole. I got bit again. Or who was bitten? Healing, renewal, and life. Well, it doesn't count for you. You stay here.

[48:41] All you got to do is look. Whosoever would look. Where was the sickness? The venom. It was in their flesh. But the cure was in a look.

It's not something they could grab onto or hold onto. You didn't have to go and touch the serpent. The cure was in a look of faith. How sad. To suffer the effects of the serpent's bite when the cure is in sight.

How sad to be laying there and someone runs in your tent and says, there's a cure. Moses has a cure. God gave us a cure. Oh, praise God. Give it to me. Shoot me up with it.

Let me take it. No, no, no. You just got to go and look at the pole. He made some kind of brass serpent on the pole. And if you look at it, you're cured. Listen, I need real help. I don't need some like hocus pocus.

I've got venom in my veins. I need something to get in this flesh. I need something that can help. And you want me to just go and look? Just look. You know what? We're going to take you anyway.

[49:41] We're going to put you down by the pole. Look, I'm not going to look. I'm not going to look. It's a look of faith. Nobody can make us look. The cure is possible and the cure is obtainable. How sad.

To be in sight of the cure and not look. Why? Because I don't understand. It doesn't make sense. That's foolish. I'm not going to do that. Oh, death.

Where is your sting? Oh, grave. Where is your victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Life was in a look, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, to be the one to represent sin, having known no sin, and is set down at the right hand of God.

You see, there is no question of the success of this cure. Just as Jesus says to Nicodemus, hey, understand the voices that are speaking to you. Whether you understand it or not, these things are true.

[50:47] There's no question of the success of the cure. But the benefit is in doubt. Because the benefit is only for those who receive God's word, believe God's word, and obeyed God's word.

It's not enough just to be told about it. It's not enough just to know that it's there. You think of that person who's like, well, I don't, I don't even know if I believe this.

I don't even know if this is going to work. But all right. What I got to lose? I'm turning purple. I'll go look at the pole and to be healed.

Was healing instant? I don't know. Maybe it was different for different people. Maybe some were cured instant. Maybe some went away going, I don't really feel anything different. Did it work? And that healing slowly took place.

But like Nicodemus, who came by night to Jesus, the point is to come and to look. We can turn back to John chapter three, if you would. Looking to the cure upon the pole did not mean understanding how it worked.

[51:51] The wind will blow where it will, but simply accepting that it did. And in verse 15, Jesus says, we'll start in 14, as Moses lifted up

the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever looks to him would have life.

He would not perish. He will not die from the bite of the serpent, from the venom of the serpent, but he will have eternal life, age abiding life. The son of man was lifted up in judgment of sin so that whoever would look upon him would receive the cure to the serpent's bite.

And upon the cross, that barrier to a new life was removed. The venom and sting of sin and death was taken out. New life.

New life is available to all who would look in faith to the man upon the pole. We're going to take communion today. It's a very appropriate Sunday for it.

But that communion, that cup and that bread, you know, as we take it, it does nothing for us. The only reason we partake is because of what has been done for us already.

[53:00] You know, the fact that that brass serpent was on the pole, it wasn't magical. We would find out Israel kept that thing for years until they're worshipping it. And they have to break it up and they call it Nahushtan, a thing of brass and breaks into a bunch of pieces.

It's nothing. It's not that thing. It's the look to what that represents. That God has provided a cure. We take communion because we know that God has provided a cure.

New life is available to all who would look. And how sad that many perish in sight of the antidote. How sad that many perish without calling out for help. And how sad that many who have received the antidote, we will still live under the pain and the effect of the serpent's bite.

Look, it's not going to kill me. Jesus took the sting out of it. But the serpent remains and he'll still bite. And how sad to live under the effects of the bite of the serpent, the venom, the poison of bitterness, of unforgiveness, of guilt, of anxiety, of discouragement.

How sad to allow that in my life to exist. Well, I've been born again. Well, Israel's cure was not eternal, was it? They could be cured and they could walk home and like, oh, you know, your wife comes in.

[54:18] Honey, I've been bit by a serpent again. Were you messing with the snake? I was. I was trying to be, I thought I could be like a snake charmer, you know? You know, I heard that was a thing.

I was like, look, I'm a husband, so that's, I would be the one who'd be like, need the wise counsel for my wife. So sorry, guys. Putting us in that place. Oh, I just, I mean, I was just cured and now I got to go back again.

This is so embarrassing. Someone's going to see me walk into that pole again, having to be cleansed. I can't believe this. I need a cure again. Israel's cure wasn't eternal. Even if they were cured and were never bitten again by the fiery serpent, they would eventually die by some means, natural means.

But our cure is eternal. But eternal life is not just about unending life. It's a quality of life that comes from God. Birth, a new birth, is birth about the moment? Ladies, those of you who had children, that moment is really big in your life, right?

Why? You know what? I gave birth to a bowling ball and I shined it up good and I put it on my shelf and it's a, I just, it's wonderful. No, it's because of the life that came from it.

[55:22] Birth has meaning because of the life that comes from it. It's not about the moment. It's about the life. Being born again is a wonderful moment, but it's about the life that comes after that.

We should not be living these unending lives with the lingering effect of the serpent's bite. We've been given eternal life. We've been given the life of the Spirit, age-abiding life.

Those of you that have older age, you know, spiritual life abides. I know, as my body begins to break down, thank the Lord, the Spirit doesn't break down with it. We should not be living under the effect of the pain and poison that comes from the serpent's bite.

The life of the Spirit is meant to release us from the bite of the serpent and to remove the poison. 1 John 1, 9, if we confess our sins, to confess simply means to say the same thing as, to be in agreement, to simply agree that my release and cleansing can only come from looking to Jesus. God, I agree. My release and cleansing, I agree that about this sin can only come from looking to you. He is faithful and just to forgive us. The word forgive literally means to let go, to release, and to cleanse, cleanse, to catheterize.

[56:42] You know what a catheter is? To stick that sucker in and release the poison. To drain it from all unrighteousness is to acknowledge that I have a need that cannot be solved by that which is of the flesh, but to accept a cure, a cure that I don't know how it works.

I don't. I have no idea how it works, but I know that it works. I know if I confess my sins, if I go to the Lord and say, Lord, I can't, I can't affect this thing in my life, it's holding on.

Stupid serpent, it's latched on and I can't get rid of it. It's just pumping its venom into my life and I want it gone. I've tried everything and I can't get rid of it. He is faithful and he's just to release us of our sins, of the bite of sin and to cleanse us, to remove the poison from the unrighteousness in our lives.

And like Jesus said to Nicodemus, I think he would say to us this morning, we should know these things. We should know these things. We should know that we don't live under the condemnation of death and of sin and we should also know that we don't have to live under the effects of that bite any longer.

We should know these things. And so as we take communion, we'll pass out the communion and Lily will play and then we'll all partake together when I come back up. Why did God send the serpents?

[58:12] You know, we didn't touch on that. That was the thing that bothered me the most in Numbers 21. Okay, I can accept the serpents in my life. I realize I need a cure. I understand that it's still there and God didn't take it out but you realize it said that God sent fiery serpents among them?

Whoa, whoa, whoa. God, you sent the serpent into my life? Why? Because he knew that only the serpent's bite would cause them to look for the cure.

Only the bite of the serpent would cause them to cry out to him. You see, the cure wasn't the venom. The cure that was needed was in the heart. It wasn't because of the venom.

It was because of the discouragement. It was because of the heart that could not see what God was doing in their lives. Why, God, did you send the serpent into my life? Why is it still holding on so tightly?

Because you need to look to me because I've got more work to do in your heart. Don't worry. The sting, the death, that's been taken out but you need to look to me.

[59:20] So as we take communion, I don't know what's in your life that you wish God would take out that you've prayed and said, oh God, remove the serpents and God says, here's the antidote. Here's the cure.

God, God, I don't want to keep coming back to the cure. It's embarrassing. I'm a pastor and I gotta be like, look at all these snake bites. I don't want to do that.

Can I just get this thing out of my life for good? It'd be wonderful. But I know myself. I know my flesh and that which is born of flesh is lazy and it won't look to the cure unless it needs it.

Father, we're gonna take communion now and Lord, we're gonna come and we're gonna receive from you something that we cannot receive from this world, something that we cannot receive in our own flesh, something that we could never rise up to.

We can never rise above the serpent. Lord, his bite was our undoing, Lord. The venom goes deep.

[60:24] Lord, you hung on that cross and you said, it is finished. It's not in question if there's a cure and Lord, I believe that we have each, most of us, if not all of us in this room have looked to that cure and if we haven't, then today is that day.

It's in a look. I don't have to understand how, but I can believe that and in one look, I can receive life and for the rest of my life in this flesh, I need the cure.

Jesus, you have brought to completion my standing before God. I can stand before you complete and whole, but how silly to not live in light of that pole.

As for me and my house, we're going to take our tent, we're going to drag it to the pole and we're going to live in light of that pole. Every window of the house is going to look at that pole. Everything we do all day long is going to be in view of that pole because if we walk in the light as he is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, releases the bite, washes away, cleanses and removes the poison.

Lord, remove the poison from our lives, Lord, of bitterness, of anger, of frustration, Lord, of doubt, of fear, of guilt and shame. God, whatever we're hanging on to, how silly when we've been released that we'll still hang on to the thing and it just keeps biting us over and over.

[61:55] But we release that to you and ask you to release us. Lord, we want to live in that age-abiding life, Lord, not something that's in the far distant future, but something we have now because as Jesus said, I am in heaven where I'm at and Jesus is here with us and we want to live those lives.

Lord, as we worship you, meet with us, remind us as we look back to the man upon the pole. And in Jesus' name, amen.