

Success - John 3:22-36

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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 and what a beautiful day. A little cold, but beautiful. So last week we finished looking at Jesus's words to Nicodemus. Nicodemus who'd come to Jesus at night, hungry for something, recognizing Jesus had something that he didn't have.

And Jesus rocks his world by talking to him about this inner transformation, this transformation of the Spirit. Something that's going to have to happen, Nicodemus, that you don't already have if you want to partake of the kingdom of God.

If you want to be part of what God is establishing. And Nicodemus, we know, will eventually, if not in this moment, he comes to believe. Because it's him and Joseph of Arimathea who will bring Jesus down off of the cross.

Who will go to Pilate and say, hey, beg the body of Jesus. And as horrific as it is, the idea of Jesus being nailed to the cross. And being the ones driving the nails.

[1:46] I don't know what, I can't put myself there, what it would be like pulling him out. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea by themselves trying to get Jesus off of this cross to put him in a tomb.

But Jesus leaves Nicodemus with this idea, this wonderful idea that God's love, it does three things. It gives. Because love gives. Love always gives. Faith receives, love gives.

Love must have an object and it gives to that object. God's love gives and God's love lives. It's alive. It's something that isn't just a one-time thing or a static thing.

It's something that is living and it's active in our lives. And God's love forgives. God's love forgives. Something that releases us. The word forgive in the Greek is to release and to let go.

So God's love releases us from our sins. It releases us from things that we can't let go of. And that we can't get to let go of us so many times. God's love, as Keller just prayed, it gives us an opportunity to walk in the light.

[2:46] As Jesus, last week, as we read where it says that everyone that does evil hates the light. Neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that does truth comes to the light.

Why? He wants to have, he wants to see, he wants to know that, God, you are working in my life. I can't believe it. I come into the light and I find out that my deeds come from God.

That the actions and attitudes and work that's happening through my life has come from God.

That's remarkable. Because I know I don't have that in myself. So I come to the light because I desire to see what God is doing.

And for those that walk in light, they partake of illumination. They see things that they never saw before. It reveals what? Well, beauty. I mean, look around.

You all look pretty beautiful to me. If there wasn't light, you wouldn't see that. You wouldn't know that. And light shows us where we're going. Otherwise, we're doing what? We're walking in darkness.

[3:44] If you walk in darkness, you might hit a wall, you might fall off a cliff. But light shows us where we're going. The light has come so that no one needs remain in darkness. Unfortunately, what happens?

Many choose to stay in darkness. They don't want to come to the light because they don't want to be exposed as a sinner. And only exposed sinners partake of God's grace.

Jesus came not for the righteous, but for sinners. So for those who walk in the light, hopefully you and I, hopefully you're walking in the light. You've come into the light of God's love and his presence

and his grace in your life.

We have successfully obtained eternal life. Remarkably amazing. And today we're going to look at that word. We're going to look a little bit and dive into this word of success.

As we're going to see in the Gospel of John, it is John the Baptist. He's not the one who wrote the Gospel of John. Different Johns. Lots of Johns. A lot of Johns here. Praise God. But success.

[4:48] We're going to see his final, not his final words. The other Gospels cover his end. But his final words, his final testimony in the Gospel of John. As we go through this, I want you to keep in mind a few things you can look for.

We're going to see a man from heaven and a man from the earth. We're going to see a man from heaven in his ministry baptizing and a man from the earth baptizing. We'll see a message from heaven, a message of the earth.

We're going to see the man from heaven increasing, the man from the earth decreasing. So as we go through this, we're going to see kind of this contrast. But what we're not going to see is we're not going to see competition.

We're going to see how instead they complement one another so well. All right, let's pick up in verse 22 of John chapter 3. You know, at Covered Chapel Charlotte, we go line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter through the Bible.

I don't jump out of the text to do a special Sunday message usually. I just rely on the Lord to just guide and the Holy Spirit to kind of bring out what he wants to.

[5:46] And I think it's quite remarkable that we're talking about reading about baptisms and we're going to have a baptism. That wasn't planned. And then next week, Resurrection Sunday.

You know, every one man esteems one day above another. One man esteems every day of like. But as long as we do all to the glory of God. Right. And every Sunday, the reason we gather on Sundays is because it's the first day of the week.

It's the day that Jesus rose. That's why we gather on Sundays. So every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday. But it's so good to just say, you know what, God, we're going to take this one and we're going to just say, God, we're going to worship you for resurrection.

Same thing we do at Christmas. Worship you for coming into this world. Man, so next week, Resurrection Sunday. We're going to be in John 4 where Jesus is going to say to the woman at the well, we could just skip the rest of this and go right to John 4.

Or he's going to say, he who drinks of this water will thirst again. But he who drinks of the water I give him will never thirst again. Such a beautiful timing that the Lord had for Resurrection Sunday.

[6:44] So that always blows my mind. And just to me is an affirmation that the Lord's in this. I'm so thankful. You wouldn't want to be here if he wasn't. So verse 22 of John chapter 3.

Wait, after these things. And we've seen as we've gone through John 1 and 2 and 3. Like as with this succession of events that John is giving us. One after another after another. And they're all building. And they're all pointing.

And they're all reflecting this heart that God has for his people that John's bringing out through the gospel. That we might believe. After these things, Jesus and his disciples.

So they've come from the wedding feast of Cain of Galilee. They've gone to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. Jesus has cleansed the temple. Jesus met with Nicodemus.

I know it took us a few weeks to get through that. But it was one night for Jesus and Nicodemus.

After these things, he and his disciples come into the land of Judea. And there he tarried with them and baptized.

[7:40] We'll break down this verse. But jump ahead real quick to verse 23. And John the Baptist was also baptizing in Anion near to Salim.

Because there was much water there. And they, people, came and were baptized. So where is this all taking place? So Jesus is in Judea. And that would be our box, our rectangle at the bottom.

That is the area about where John, originally John the Baptist, was baptizing. Where Jesus would have been baptized. John has moved north. And we're going to see why when we get to the next scripture. To Anion of Salim.

Which means springs of peace. Is where John is at up there. And the little circle, just to give context, is just where Jerusalem is. So Jesus and his disciples, they are coming into Judea. John would be adjacent to Samaria. The Jews would never go through Samaria. They would go east, down to about where that first box is. Up the Jordan Valley. Even though it was more dangerous.

[8:42] And there was robbers there and all of that. That's where the story of the Good Samaritan happens. Where the robbers attack the guy. To get up to Galilee. Because they would not go through Samaria.

Next week in John 4, we're going to see where Jesus says, He must needs go through Samaria. But this is where the location is of these guys. It says, Jesus and his disciples were baptizing. If we look ahead to John 4, verse 2. It's going to give us a little insight into this. And it says, though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples. Thank you, John, for putting that in there. You know what we'd have in the church today if that wasn't in there? Well, I come from the order of the baptized by Jesus brethren. You know, it'd be. No, Jesus didn't baptize anyone. It was his disciples were. It says he came into that area and he tarried there.

Tarry means to pass away time. To wear away. To pass the time. And just to while away the time. The emphasis of the scripture, it seems to be that first, Jesus is prioritizing time with his disciples.

[9:43] Then, subsequent to that, they're baptizing. The priority here is to be with his disciples. The way the scriptures laid out. You know, Jesus was never in a hurry. There's no scripture that says, and Jesus rushed.

Jesus was in a hurry. And Jesus wasn't ready. He was never in a hurry. He accomplished all things in their time. Never in a hurry. Why wasn't he in a hurry? Because he was doing his father's will. And his father had everything planned out. All he had to do was just do his will. Jesus is prioritizing here time together, not time on tasks.

The priority is not getting the task done. It's fellowshiping with those that he's doing the task with. So at this moment, what do we have? We have Jesus. He's been anointed for ministry, right? He was baptized by John. The Holy Spirit comes down. It tells us that he goes 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness and returns from there in the power of the Holy Spirit. Anointed for ministry.

[10:44] He accomplished his first miracle. The wedding feast of Cana. Turning the water to wine. He's cleansed the temple. Saying, this is my father's house. And he's instructed the teacher. The guy, Nicodemus, in Israel.

And what is the next thing he does? Goes and hangs out with his disciples. He prioritizes time with his disciples. And what appears to be, he goes and supports another man's ministry.

Jesus doesn't say, hey John, buddy, you don't need to be baptizing anymore. I'm here now. Get out of the way. No, he goes and he supports. He validates what John is doing.

Hey, John, John's doing a good work. I'm going to enter into that with him. But work accomplished is never the end. It is a means to an end.

But it is never the end. The goal is never to accomplish the work. Jesus would say in John 4, 34. We'll see that in a couple weeks in John 4.

[11:45] My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work. Was that the goal? Just to get the work done? Jesus said, I'm just here. I need to get this work done. No. What was the goal of all of that work?

To accomplish his work for what purpose? Hosanna. Save now. That he might gather to himself a people. That he might save. That he might fellowship. We have a promise in Philippians 1, 6.

Paul says, being confident of this very thing. That he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Praise God. He's going to get me there.

Okay. That's what it's all about. It's just about getting the work done. Is that what it's about? That I can be confident he'll finish the work? Praise the Lord. Man, but I can be confident that he is in the work with me every step of the way.

Jesus' desire is what? Fellowship. He prioritizes time with his disciples above getting the work done. And we see here that he's not pushing John out of the way.

[12:46] Jesus has come to fulfill heaven's purposes. He did not supersede them. He didn't say, hey, John, there's no use for you anymore, buddy. It's time to set you aside. But Jesus did not set aside what was legitimately of God.

John was legitimately of God. So Jesus enters into that ministry with him. But what does Jesus do? Jesus does more than what any other man could do.

John enters into his ministry and says, okay, I've done my purpose. I've anointed. I've shown the one. I pointed the way to the Lamb of God. Well, my ministry is done.

He's here now. No, he still has a ministry. Jesus comes. He says, get rid of John. No, John still has a ministry. Matthew 11, 13 says, for all the prophets in the law prophesied until John.

And then we have in Matthew also, it says, Jesus says, think not, I've come to destroy the law. I've come not to destroy, but to fulfill. John, the last of the prophets, prophesying until John the Baptist.

[13:51] And Jesus beautifully just comes and comes alongside him and compliments the work that he's doing. And here we see John in verse 23. He was also baptizing in Aeneon near to Salim.

Again, the springs of peace. Why? Because there's much water there. And they came and were baptized. I mean, we're going to do a baptism. And what do we need?

Water and somebody get baptized. You need water. Kind of how it works. But why is he there?

Because there's much water. His ministry's grown. It's grown.

He can't, he can't, the water where he's baptized, he can't support it. His ministry has grown, but not in response to some growth program. Not in response to, you know what, boys? We need to go find a bigger swimming hole.

We need to find a bigger pond to swim in. Let's go to make this ministry bigger. No, it grew in response to people's desire to hear truth and to be right with God. The people came to John the Baptist.

[14:48] They wanted to hear truth. They want to be right with God. And it got to a point where he's like, man, we need to go to where there's much water. Because there's just not enough here. John did not seek size in his ministry.

He simply sought to accommodate the people he served. He wasn't looking for a big ministry. Guys, I hope we outgrow this watering hole. I hope that's a day that we just can't fit here.

Not to seek size, but to accommodate the people who want to hear truth and be right with God.

That's the only reason we're here. And I hope there comes a day where it's like, you know what?

We need to go find a place where there's much seats. Because there's not enough here. Praise God. Verse 24 tells us that all this took place before John was cast in prison. For John was not yet cast in prison.

John, the apostle, is giving us that little footnote. Because all the other gospels have written about John the Baptist. And he's telling us now, hey, those other things, this happened before the prison incident.

[15:46] That is in Luke chapter 3. We can read about that. In verse 18, we read, So Herod the Tetrarch.

Tetrarch just means one of four. Herod the Great was the Herod who was alive during Jesus' birth. He was one who had the innocent children the kids put together to death in Bethlehem.

He had sons. And after he passed his kingdom, he was considered King Herod because he ruled over the kingdom of Judea, of Israel. And he was a servant king under Rome, though.

Rome allowed him because he was a vassal king. He dies. His kingdom split up. His one son here, Herod the Tetrarch, Herod Antipas, I think is his name, he ends up ruling over Galilee at that time.

You can see from our map that John is moving in which direction? He's moving up towards Galilee in his ministry. And he speaks out against Herod. And he tells Herod, he says, hey, you shouldn't have your brother's wife.

[16:56] He speaks out to him against Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. And so Herod the Tetrarch liked his brother's wife and took him to be his wife. And also for all the evils which Herod had done.

And then Herod added, yet this one more evil, he threw John in prison. You know, we live in a world that, unfortunately, that doesn't sound too bad.

Okay, some guy went and stole his brother's wife. You know, there's much worse things in the world. There's much worse things in our culture. There's much worse immorality. And there is. There is.

And yet this man was put in prison for this. And we allow everything in our culture and our society. God doesn't look lightly upon the things that he has established in his creation.

Before the fall, marriage was instituted. Before the fall, the gender of man and the gender of woman was created and established. Jesus will say, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife.

[18:01] For what cause? Because he made them male and female from the beginning. This wouldn't put anyone in jail today. God takes it very serious. The things that are part of his order.

Jesus will see in Matthew 4.12. It says, Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee. So we see that Jesus does not begin his own public ministry or his more public ministry until John completes his.

Because a genuine move of God, it compliments. It never competes. If it's a move of God, it will not compete. Jesus didn't come to compete with John.

He compliments him. And again, Jesus is not in a hurry. He has his own timing. When John is only after he's put into prison, then Jesus then departs into Galilee.

And there arose at this time a question between some of John's, the Baptist, disciples and the Jews about purifying. And we're not told a lot of detail about this, just that it happened.

[19:05] We know that the religion of the Jews at this time was very outward focused. Even Nicodemus comes and says, Hey, Jesus, we know who you are by the things you're doing. We know that eventually the scribes and Pharisees come to Jesus and they complain and they say, Jesus, we got one on you.

And Jesus is probably like, what have I done? Your disciples eat with unwashed hands. Like, wow. And it's not just they were dirty. Ceremonially unclean.

How could they do this? They do not eat with washed hands. They're not keeping the tradition of the elders. They break those traditions. You don't ever want to try and get a gotcha movement with Jesus, right?

They say, why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? And Jesus turns and says, why do you transgress the commands of God to keep your traditions? And they didn't say anything. The religion of the Jews at this time was very outward focused. It was what they were doing, not who they were. Perhaps this question was over what type of purification came from baptism.

[20:12] I mean, John's baptizing. His ministry is growing. And maybe they're asking, what is the point of this? What type of law does this fulfill? Mark 1.4 says that John baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for remission of sins.

It's not an outward work of purification. But it was an inward work of preparedness. It was for preparation. And both John and Jesus at this time will be baptizing for a work of preparation. Saying, hey, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Be prepared. So baptism at this time was to declare that one has prepared himself for the coming king.

If I go and be baptized under John's ministry, and I assume Jesus is. We're not exactly told what he's doing in his baptism. But it's to prepare. But you say, hey, I'm prepared. I'm prepared for the coming king.

Okay, what about baptisms today? Why do we baptize in the church? What does that tell us? In the church, it's not that we are prepared so much for the coming king, but that we have been prepared by the coming king.

[21:22] Man, I can be baptized because I can say, hey, this is an outward sign of an inward work. God has prepared me. I have been prepared by the king and prepared for the king. And then I want to declare that.

In Acts chapter 2, remember on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit's come and the gift to the church, to the bride, to the body of Christ, and the disciples go out and they begin to speak with other tongues.

And they think, well, they're all drunk. Peter says, no, no, no, no, no. So he stands up and he preaches this amazing message. Amazing because of the power of the Holy Spirit and the true words of God. And it says they're cut to the heart.

They said, men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you because that'll cleanse you. No, be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And be baptized in the name of Christ. Declare, be willing to declare that, hey, God has done an inward work. I'm going to declare that by this outward work.

[22:26] Acts chapter 8, Philip is up in Samaria. There's a revival. Remember, we just talked about the Jews don't go through Samaria. Philip, after resurrection, after the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church, he goes up to Samaria, begins preaching the gospel, and boom, there's revival.

The Samaritans come to Christ. So the church in Jerusalem sends the apostles up there, sends Peter and John to go up and check it out. And specifically, it says to pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Philip's doing this great work. And then in that moment, God says to Philip, hey, leave this work. Go down to Gaza, the road to Gaza. And Philip says, okay.

And heads down there. And on the way, he meets the Ethiopian eunuch, right? And he hears him reading from the book of Isaiah. Now, I don't know if he was reading it out loud or if he had the guy riding with him reading it.

But either way, Philip heard this. And he goes and he says, hey, do you know what you're reading? He's like, how can I? Unless someone instructs me. So Philip joins himself with him and instructs him. And this guy gets so excited.

[23:29] And it must be through what Philip's telling him about Jesus and about baptism. How John baptized and Jesus baptized. And then about subsequent after that. Hey, now in the church, we baptize as a symbol of an inward work recognized by this outward act.

And then he interrupts him. The eunuch does. And says, here's water. Here's some water. What hinders me from being baptized? And Philip says, you may.

If you believe with all your heart. And he said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. And they went down and baptized him. That simple. So baptism is an outward response of an inward reality.

And so then, whatever this discussion was about purification, then John's disciples, John the Baptist's disciples in verse 26, comes back to John. And they say to him, Rabbi, master, teacher, he that was with you beyond Jordan, to whom you bear witness, behold, the same baptizes and all come to him.

Seems as if the Jews' focus on outward purification had led these disciples to focus on outward signs of success. In their attempt to elevate John, John, you're the guy.

[24:47] Look at the terms they use here. Rabbi. John, you're greater than Jesus. You're the teacher. He that was with you beyond Jordan. He was with you.

John, you were there before Jesus. He had to come to you. Remember that, John? To whom you bear witness. John, Jesus wouldn't have any success if it wasn't for you.

It's because you gave him his position. You're the one who called him out. Remember? Behold, the same baptizes. And if you've had little kids, he's copying you. Jesus is copying you.

He can't copy you. And all come to him. Jesus is stealing your success, John. Oh. The Jews' focus on outward purification had led these disciples to focus on outward signs of success.

And in seeking to elevate John, who were they putting down? Jesus. To elevate John, they put down Jesus. God's work never competes.

[25:47] Always complements. Jesus says in John 12, 32, And if I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.

Now, clearly he's talking about the cross. But as Jesus is lifted, what happens? People are drawn to him. They go to him. And here, these disciples seem well-meaning, but well-meaning pride is still pride.

Pride. Pride. And these disciples, they're concerned that the ministry was being done the right way. Well, ministry needs to be done the right way. Seems to maybe have been simply a cloak for their own resentment of someone else's success.

Like, instead of coming and saying, John, guess what we just heard? Remember that guy you said is a lamb of God? Remember a couple of your disciples? Peter and Andrew and John. Remember they left and they went with him? Man, all men are coming to him. All men are coming to the lamb of God, John. Instead, it seems that they are hiding their own resentment as someone else's success behind the cloak of, Well, ministry needs to be done the right way.

[26:53] He's not doing it the right way. But it's being blessed by God. But God clearly in this, Jesus is being lifted up and men are coming to who? Jesus. Jesus. Then it seems like the ministry is okay.

We said this before in looking at John when he first came on the scenes in John chapter 1, that personal success, it's not a result of someone else's success. My personal success is not a result, it's not affected by someone else's success.

If I'm being successful in what God's called me to do, and someone else comes and is more successful, that's no bearing upon my success. Right? But unfortunately, very often, personal resentment is a result of someone else's success.

When I see someone else's success, it doesn't affect my success, but unfortunately many times does result in personal resentment. Resent means to consider something an injury or an affront. And what is the danger of resentment? That it can never see true success in a positive light.

Romans 12, 15, rejoice with them that do rejoice. Well, I would, but they're just not doing it right.

[28:03] You know, they're just, I know better. You know, I mean, imagine if John the Baptist, because we're going to see his response to this, but imagine if he said, you know what?

You're right. You're right. We need to circle the wagons. We need to keep the people here. What would happen? What would he be doing? He'd be keeping people from Jesus.

From Jesus. From Jesus. From experiencing coming into the light and receiving life. The danger of resentment is that it never sees true success in a positive light. And resentment, unresolved and unrepented of, turns to bitterness.

Bitterness, a grudge, extreme enmity. I like this definition. Implacableness. Cannot be placated. Cannot be satisfied.

Bitterness is a poison that gets into every area of our life. All of a sudden, everything. That guy always talks about that thing. Every conversation brings it up.

[29:00] Every situation, it's there. That resentment, that bitterness, that. And even in a situation, someone who's bitter, if the person they were bitter against was to go to them and say, I'll do anything.

It wouldn't matter. Because bitterness cannot be placated. Can't be satisfied. We were talking about Philip in Samaria. When he left there and went down to Gaza.

While he was in Samaria. And this revival is happening. There's another man there. His name was, they call him Simon the Sorcerer. And he at times would use his sorcery to bewitch people and make people think he was a great man.

But he believes. He comes to know. He puts his faith in Christ. And he's following the apostles. He's following Philip. And he's seeing these great signs being done. And he's seeing that whoever Peter and John are praying for, these believers and laying their hands on them, they receive the Holy Spirit.

And all of a sudden, these people are operating in a capacity they never could before. He's like, I want to be a part of that. So he takes out his Venmo.

[30:02] And says, hey, Peter, how much? How much that I can be a part of that? I want to be a part of your success. I want to be a part of this ministry. I'll contribute to it.

But I'd like a little position myself. I kind of want to be thought of as a great man, too. Well, why is that such a bad thing? He wants to be part of the ministry. He wants to support it.

Peter's response, I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness. And you're in the bond of iniquity. Simon, you've got to let go of these things because they're holding tight to you.

And Simon answers and says, pray. Please pray for me to the Lord. Peter, you pray for me that none of these things which you've spoken will come upon me. Prayer restores a proper perspective. Nothing else will. Well, bitterness is a poison that when it gets in there, the only thing that will overcome that is prayer. And here this man recognizes what Peter says is true. I am in the gall of bitterness. I'm in the bond of iniquity.

[31:03] And I can't get out. Please pray. Pray that proper perspective will be restored. I don't know if these guys are resentful or not.

I don't know if they were just concerned for John. But I do know because I know the workings of my own heart. That many times I can hide resentment. I can hide bitterness.

I can hide iniquity behind something that seems pretty good. Oh, he's just contributing to the ministry. He just wants to do it the right way. No, I'm just... I just got my feelings hurt that it wasn't done my way.

And John answers now in verse 27. He answers his disciples. And he says, A man can receive nothing. Receive means to take to oneself.

He can take nothing to himself except to be given him from heaven. Given to bestowed or granted. I can't take anything to myself from heaven. You know what? I want to be part of that. I want to do that.

[32:02] I can't take that to myself. I can take nothing except to be granted. It'd be bestowed from heaven. John's saying, Fellas, you think I took this to myself? You think it was my idea to dress in camel's hair and eat locusts and wander around in the desert?

Wasn't that my idea? You think it was my idea to just... You know what? I'm going to start a ministry of baptism. I'm going to start calling the Pharisees, you generation of vipers. Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

We'll see how that goes over. Maybe we'll start a ministry. 1 Corinthians 4, 7 says, For who makes you to differ from another? Paul writing to his Corinthian brethren who had so much carnality.

And what of you that you've not received? Now, if you received it, why do you glory as if you didn't receive it? Why do you act like what's been given to you is like because of you?

Oh, man. Well, of course God gave me salvation because he wanted to do such wonderful things through me. He obviously couldn't do them through everybody else, so he gave. It's been given.

Even in Isaiah, all the way back in the Old Testament, we see here, Isaiah says, Thus saith God the Lord.

[33:07] God is speaking this. He that created the heavens and stretched them out. He that spread forth the earth and that which comes out of it. He that gives breath unto the people in it.

Spirit to them that walk therein. You say, man, I'm a self-made man. God didn't give me anything. It says right here, God gave you your breath and put the spirit of life within you. There is nothing we have that we haven't received because it originates with God.

John has a proper perspective because his perspective points where? It points to heaven. I don't have anything except what's been given me from heaven. And you yourself, guys, you bear witness to me that I said I'm not the Christ.

That was in John chapter 1, verses 20 and 23. I'm not the Christ. I'm simply the voice saying, prepare you the way. I'm not the Christ, but that I'm sent before him.

So he's saying, you know this, guys. The disciples of John, they did not have a lack of perspective due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. He said, you knew this.

[34:09] I told you this. So your perspective is screwed up and it's not because you don't know or understand. It's because what? Perhaps a lack of humility. Perhaps resentment. Either way, he says, you know this.

In verse 29, he then goes on to explain his relationship to Jesus. The man from heaven and the man of the earth. He that has the bride is the bridegroom.

As a kid, I always heard that. I grew up in the church. Bride and bridegroom. Isn't it the same thing? Like both a bride, right? Bridegroom is the groom of the bride. Just the groom. He that has the bride is the bridegroom.

But the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, he rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is full. The bridegroom, the groom, how do I identify

him?

He's the one who the bride goes to. The groom is identified by his relationship to the bride. John 10, 27. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

[35:16] So you have two men dressed really nice. The groom and the friend of the groom. How do you know which is which? Well, the one the bride goes to is the groom. The other one is just a friend of the groom.

My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. The bridegroom receives the bride. The bridegroom knows the bride and loves the bride.

How do you know which one is the groom? The one who receives the bride. The one who knows the bride. The one who loves the bride. What does the friend of the bridegroom do? He stands with the groom. Tells us that he rejoices to hear his voice.

But the friend of the bridegroom which stands and hears him rejoices greatly. He rejoices at his words. And he's filled with joy at the marriage of the groom.

What is success? That the bride gets to the groom. John is saying all that matters is the bride is getting to the groom.

[36:18] All that matters is people are getting to Jesus. All that matters is people are getting to the lamb. You see what John the Baptist's disciples saw as a problem, he saw as success.

His joy wasn't in the size of his ministry. It was in successfully getting the bride to the bridegroom. People came to John the Baptist's church because it was a big watering hole.

They said, you know, I like this place. He said, well, that's great. I'm glad you're here. I recommend next week you go to this other church. Up the street, Jesus is there.

Listen, guys, if Jesus was up the street teaching at another church, well, I wouldn't be here. I'd be there. But if like John, Jesus said, I want you to stay there and I want you to continue in your ministry.

Well, my ministry would change and it would be like, welcome. Let me show you the word, tell you who Jesus is and tell you where to find him. Go up the street, get out of here. But I think I can say the same thing today.

[37:23] You should be where Jesus is. You should be in a church where Jesus is being taught. And if it's not, go somewhere else. Don't be there because the watering hole is big and they got a bunch of good programs.

If you're here because of the people, if you're here because of the food, if you're here because you just like serving in ministry in the heart. Oh, great. Man, if you're not getting taught, if you're not getting fed, if you can't receive the words that are being spoken, I don't mean by me.

I mean what Jesus is doing, God's doing through this ministry. Jesus isn't being taught and you're not being edified. Go find somewhere where you are. Go find somewhere where you can come to the bridegroom. It's not about what we've learned.

When you leave this door, you should be like, man, I've gone to Jesus. And I'm going to go to him all throughout this week. John says in verse 30, He must necessary what is right and proper, what cannot be done without.

He must increase. He must grow. He must become great. But I, it is necessary right and proper for me that I diminish, that I become less, that I am made inferior.

[38:34] The growth and success of Jesus's ministry, it would be at a cost to John. It will cost him the size of his ministry because Jesus's will grow and John's will get smaller.

So it will eventually cost John his freedom and eventually his life. The growth and success of Jesus's ministry. But John's focus, I think like Paul in Philippians chapter 3, it was not on what he lost, but on what he gained.

But what things were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss. For the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord. For whom I've suffered the loss of all things.

And I do count them but rubbish, filth, worthless. That I may win Christ. John's focus wasn't on his loss. It was on Christ's gain.

These people are going to the bridegroom. I am rejoicing in this. And John said, I must decrease. You know what happens? The smaller I see myself. And maybe you're sitting there and you think,

man, I don't think much of myself.

[39:39] What can God do with me? I don't think I'm very much. The smaller I see myself, the bigger Jesus becomes. The greater Jesus is, the smaller I am.

The bigger I get. Well, Jesus, you and I are kind of like buddies. We're kind of like equals in this, right? Ministry together, right? Or even worse. As John the Baptist's disciples.

Well, John, you put Jesus in that. If it wasn't for you, those people would know Jesus. No, no, no. No. No, this big me, Jesus.

Jesus. The smaller I see myself, the bigger Jesus becomes. Now, if John at this time, again, had chosen to hold on to his success, he's successful. Who would he have hurt?

Who would he have hurt Jesus's ministry? Not going to hurt Jesus's ministry. But he would have hurt the people he was supposed to be pointing to the bridegroom. He would have withheld those people from getting to Jesus.

[40:40] From the bride getting to her groom. Success is not measured by size or by status. It's measured by faithfulness.

It's measured by the faithfulness of the service. Jesus, in Matthew 25, gives the parable of the talents. And the guy comes who has ten talents. And he says, hey, I've got a hundred percent return on this.

Here's ten more. And Jesus says, well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord. And the guy with five standing there going, I only got five.

I didn't get ten. He's like, Jesus, you gave me five and I got five. And Jesus says, well done.

Because you got a lot. No, good and faithful. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter into the joy of the Lord. What the world would see in John the Baptist's life and ministry is decreased. John, what's happened, buddy? You moved to a new church and now you had all these people and now it's smaller.

[41:38] They're leaving. What's going on? The world would see as decreased. God sees as great gain in his eyes. He says, well done, John. Well done, good and faithful servant.

You did good with what I gave you. He that comes from above, verse 31, is above all. He that's of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He that comes from above or from heaven is above all. He who comes from the highest place is the highest one. It only makes sense then that Jesus's words as the one from the highest place, who is highest of all, should be given the highest place in our lives.

It only makes sense. Jesus's words should be given the highest place. John's voice, while a heavenly message, right? He cannot receive anything from heaven but what's been given him. It does not mean he is of heaven.

John speaks to the earth as one who's of the earth. And his message, though great, it's limited by the messenger. The message we bring is limited by this messenger. I can't spell, I run my words together, I talk too fast.

[42:43] It's heavily limited by this messenger. Jesus's message is not only of heavenly origin, but so is the messenger. And only a heavenly perspective will acknowledge that heavenly message.

He that comes from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard, he testifies. And no man receives his testimony. Comparatively few. The one who is above all, comes from all, above all, is the highest of all.

And so few receive his testimony. Because they don't have a heavenly perspective. Man will not receive a heavenly testimony. Why? Because we're of the earth. We have an earthly perspective.

And we resent Jesus's heavenly truths. Don't we? 1 John 5, 9 says, If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.

For this is the witness of God, which he has testified of his son. Now there are good witnesses like John the Baptist. Man, there's guys I listen to. Good teachers. Good Bible expositors.

[43:54] Man, I appreciate those men and their message. But anytime any of those messages compete with the words of the one who's from highest and is the highest, I go with the words of Jesus.

But it's easier sometimes. It's easier to receive the words and the message from an earthly messenger. Because then I can say, you know what? I didn't really jive with that guy. I didn't really like that. You know, maybe that's his perspective. Maybe that's all it was. But when I hear Jesus's words and Jesus's message is coming from Jesus, all of a sudden, I've got to do something with that now.

I can't just deny that. I can't just reject that. Because as 1 John tells us, we make him a liar. His words are not in us. He that has received his testimony, when you do receive his testimony, you set to his seal, not God's seal.

We are sealing for ourselves that God is true. It means a stamp for security. It would be like the wax seal that would be on something. We are sealing the fact when we receive his testimony that, hey, God is true.

[45:01] This is a sealed fact in my life. We can take to ourselves the words of Jesus. He's given them to us and we can receive them. He that has received, he that takes to himself the words of Jesus.

Praise God. He's from the highest of all, the highest placed of all. He is the highest of all. And he doesn't withhold anything from us. He gives us the greatest thing, his word. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Receiving Jesus's heavenly words, it secures for me to do what? It secures for me the ability to see things as Jesus does. When I receive his word, all of a sudden it gives me a perspective now.

A perspective that, oh, I can process this and I can understand this as Jesus would. Oh, I don't need to be resentful because they have success. Praise God. Look what he's doing through them. That has nothing to do with me.

How wonderful. May God be glorified. And I wonder how I could compliment that. I wonder how I could support that. I have a different perspective when I receive Jesus's words. There is no perspective that is of God that will seek to decrease truth in my life.

[46:08] There's no perspective that can be of God that will seek to decrease truth. It doesn't matter how great the man is, how many books he wrote. It doesn't matter. That would not be a heavenly message.

And if God is true, then there is no higher perspective than God's. For he whom God has sent, he speaks the words of God.

For God gives not the spirit by measure unto him. Measure means there's no limited supply. It's not limited. Jesus receives from heaven a commission. He's sent by God.

He receives a message, the words of God. And he receives the spirit and all in limitless supply. Jesus comes as the limitless bearer of the new covenant.

He's not giving it out just a little bit here and a little bit there. Jesus gives us his word. He gives us his spirit. He gives us his life and all in limitless supply. The new covenant is not given in a limited supply from God.

[47:07] But what we receive in the new covenant is unlimited life in God. Is there a limit to God? No, he's limitless. And what does he give us?

Himself. I have unlimited access and life in God. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God. For God gives not the spirit by measure unto him. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. There's two times in this book, in John 3 and John 5, where we'll see that the Father loves the Son.

In John 5, verse 22, it says, For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son. Man, see, Jesus came to judge.

Now, we just read that. John 3, 16, For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

[48:15] Jesus has been given judgment, not for condemnation, but for the sake of love and of life. The Father loves the Son.

In John 5, verse 22, we saw all judgments given unto the Son. You think, well, maybe judgment for sin. Well, if we back up in John 5, beginning in verse 20, we read, For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

For as the Father raises up the dead and brings them to life, even so the Son gives life to whom he will. And then it says, For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son. Judgment for what? Judgment as a sinner? You are worthy of sin? No. Judgment as a sinner, and you are worthy of life. Are you worthy of salvation? Are you worthy of Hosanna? Save now? What is the requirement? Believe. That we would believe. He that believes on the Son, he has everlasting life.

[49:25] Jesus' heavenly judgment in my life must increase, and my earthly judgment must decrease. And you know where I struggle with that the most? Oh, I don't struggle with it looking at your lives.

I can judge you. No. I struggle with that the most when Jesus passes judgment on my life. Judgment of grace, of forgiveness, of acceptance, of love, and says, Hey, let's go do something. Come on. Come spend some time with me. Let's go baptize some people. Let's go. Lord, I don't judge myself worthy. God, I'm a sinner. Yeah, yeah, I know. But I came into the world not to condemn you, but to save you. I want you to have life. He that believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he that believes not the Son shall not see life. That word see is to behold. The same word when John the Baptist said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And the wrath of God abides on him. The one who comes from heaven, he speaks of heaven, and he offers heaven.

[50:30] But how do we receive heaven? Only on heaven's terms. Heaven is accepted on heaven's terms. To believe means to credit to be true, to give credit to something.

So the credit I give to Jesus must do what in my life? Increase. The credit I give to anything else must decrease. When we receive heaven's terms, we then are free to receive heaven's benefits. And they are glorious benefits. Everlasting life. He that believes on the Son has currently, actively, without limit, ever increasing, never diminishing, everlasting life.

And yet those who will give no credit to Jesus, those who will give no credit to what he says, and says Jesus condemns them. And they're in death. No, it simply says they stay in the place they were already at.

They already were experiencing loss. They already were under wrath. They already were in death. Because they will not behold. They will not see the Lamb.

[51:36] They will not see life. They will not have a perspective that allows them to see that the one who comes from heaven is offering them heaven. Life is only beheld when we behold the Lamb. And heaven's terms rejected will result in heaven's benefits lost and our sins and consequences remaining.

Abide means to remain. To not be removed. God's wrath. Wrath is simply God's settled displeasure against sin. It is settled.

God's settled displeasure against sin, either temporary or eternal. And so, if I choose to allow his wrath to abide on me, his wrath is current and active.

His wrath is without limit. I can't hope. Well, maybe someday it'll just get better. Maybe eventually, like, God will change his mind. It'll let me in on my terms.

And it's ever increasing and ever diminishing. See how important it is to take this light out? Because people are not judged by God. They're already under judgment from themselves and their own sin.

[52:46] And God has come into this world and said, I've given you a way out. Please come. Let me just shine the light on you. And they run from it. It's not that there's not a way. It's that the only way is to shine light into darkness.

And darkness hates it, so they run. Well, couldn't we do this a way that I can stay dark? Couldn't we do this in some way that I don't have to confess my sin? Couldn't I get life somehow? Spiritual life that doesn't require spiritual birth.

Verse 19 of John 3, And this is the condemnation that light has come into the world. And men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. We do not need to remain in God's wrath unless we choose to remain in our sin.

What about for the one who's heard the voice of the bridegroom? What about for the one who's the friend has stood and he's watched?

They've heard his voice and they've come to him. What about the bride? Well, if we believe we have everlasting life. If we don't, the wrath of God abides on us.

[53:50] So if we believe it means what? The wrath of God no longer abides. It no longer remains. It's now been removed. Wrath does not abide on the bride.

Neither does it await the bride. We have heard his voice. The bride's future is not wrath. The bride's future is the blessed hope of resurrection. Romans 6, 3-5 Do you not know that as many of you as were baptized?

Oh, so we get baptized. No, baptized into Christ. Baptized into Christ by his spirit. Were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.

That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

Man, have you been baptized into his death? Have you put your faith in Christ? I did not go down into death with Jesus, but I've been received into it as if I did. I was not physically raised with him, but I have been baptized into him.

[55:00] He's brought me into that as if I've lived it. Now, did Jesus go down into death? He did. Did he come out of life? He did. Did he walk in newness of life? He did. And do we partake of all of that?

We do. With Christ as the bride. What is the next thing Jesus did? After he walked in newness of life among us. After resurrection. He ascended.

And we too will ascend with Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15, 20 Now Christ is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Just as Jesus died and rose, we died and rose with him. Just as Jesus walked in newness of life, we are to walk in newness of life in this life. Until what? Until he takes us home.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus, they're preparing people for a kingdom. A kingdom that encompassed so much more than outward acts and signs. Unfortunately, comparatively few would receive that kingdom.

[56:03] And unfortunately, comparatively few from that day till now have received that kingdom. But many have. And there are many more that will. You know, it's Palm Sunday.

It said it's not the actual day Jesus wrote in. Next week's not the actual day he rose. But Jesus did ride into Jerusalem on the very day prophesied in Daniel 9, verse 25.

483 years to the day he rode into Jerusalem. The king comes riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey. Unfortunately, his people Israel were not willing to enter the kingdom with him.

His disciples said, Hosanna, save now. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. And said, oh Jerusalem, I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not.

And you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Jesus' disciples said, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. He entered Jerusalem and they crucified him. Tells us in Acts, the Romans, the Jews, and wicked men put him to death.

[57:11] They wanted an outward show of force and Jesus came to give an inward reality of life. And yet Jesus, who was rejected by the nation of Israel, he has promised to return and redeem and rescue his people.

And they will say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And yet before he returns to Israel to take redeemed Israel and set up a kingdom, redeemed Israel nationally, there are redeemed Israel today, the first fruits, the remnant of believing Jews.

But before he returns to Israel, he has first promised to return for his bride. I know I quote it all the time because it's my blessed hope.

Because I don't care what any man says, any voice from this earth. I'm going with the words of Jesus. In my father's house are many dwelling places. And if it were not so, I would have told you. He would have used his words to tell us something different. I go and I prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am, there you may be also.

[58:15] And where I go, you know, and the way you know, I have trusted him that he has taken me down into death with him. I have trusted him. He's brought me back up to life. And I am trusting him that I am walking in newness of life today with him.

And I'm going to trust him that he's going to take me to be with his father. Baptism is a declaration that we are now prepared for the bridegroom.

And we are partakers of his life. Baptism is an outward witness, an outward immersion, and an outward, as it were, cleansing. It is simply a symbol of a spiritual witness, a spiritual immersion, and a spiritual cleansing.

Baptism acknowledges a life alive in the spirit as a member of the bride. And what do both the bride and the spirit say together? It calls for their groom.

And the spirit and the bride say, come and let him that hears come. Revelation 22, 17. We increase successfully.

[59:17] How do we get success? How do I increase in success? We increase successfully when we acknowledge our king, enter his kingdom, and partake of his life. And to do that, I must decrease.

He must increase. For by one spirit, 1 Corinthians 12, 13. For by one spirit, are we all baptized into one body.

As the baptized bride, we are looking for, we are longing for, and we are living for Jesus. Amen? Amen. Well, Lord, we are going to stop there for today and look forward to John chapter 4 next week.

But thank you. Thank you for sending your son. Father, thank you for sending the voice from heaven, the one highest of all, to come and take the lowest place. Notice we are celebrating Palm Sunday.

We look forward to Resurrection Sunday, but before that would have been the crucifixion. When you took upon yourself the form of a servant, became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

[60:25] Thank you, Jesus. As the highest of all, you took the lowest place and you used that platform to raise us up higher than we ever should have been. Thank you, Lord.

As your bride, we say, come. As the spirit within us cries out for you, we cry out too that you would come quickly. Thank you for being a faithful, faithful servant. You were successful because of your faithfulness.

Do that work in us, Lord. Love you. We thank you. And in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.