

# February 09, 2003, Am

by Stephen Fenton

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting Jesus, not just having knowledge of Him, and the consequences of not making that decision.*

**Duration:** 41:41

**Scripture:** Isaiah 42:3, Matthew 7:1, Luke 23:43, John 3:15-17, Romans 2:15

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Salvation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the portrayal of Jesus in movies and how it can be difficult to truly understand his character. He emphasizes that it is easier for us to define evil than it is to define good, as we are naturally drawn to evil. The speaker then encourages the audience to reflect on their own lives and what they are attracted to on a daily basis. The sermon concludes with a focus on John 3:16, highlighting the profound love of God for the world and the importance of accepting his provision for salvation.

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## Transcript

The whole Bible and some of the things that are said there. Last week we went back to go again into John chapter 3 and verse 16. I know that many of you know this verse by heart.

Can we say it together this morning? Because it's probably the most well-known verse in the New Testament. And it's a precious verse, isn't it? So let's say it together. Doesn't matter what version you happen to be using or familiar with.

If it's language is a little different, that's fine. But let's say it all together, okay? After two. One, two.

For God so loved the world that he give his one and only son that whoever lives in him should not perish but have eternal life. Hallelujah. What great words.

For God so loved the world. That's a great word that is given to us. A great word that is given to us in this passage.

God loves the world. I don't understand that. The world's not very lovable.

The world is not very lovable. We live in a world full of wickedness and full of conceit and full of sin. Things that are contrary to what God wants for us.

That's what sin is. It's when we go against what he has designed or what he has told us is good for us. That's funny.

We should do that a lot. And yet still God loves us. We turned our backs on him back in the Garden of Eden, but still God loves us.

We continued through century after century of world history to turn our backs on the things that God thinks are good and bring our attention upon those things that God says are bad. We do it. We have done it since then and we do it in our generation in the same way that generations have done it before us.

Some people think that our generation is different than any other. It's not. Solomon said there's nothing new under the sun and there isn't.

The same wickedness that we see today has been seen in the world before. Because man never changed. Jesus, it says, came into the world and he did not give himself to man.

He did not trust himself to their care. See that in John and in chapter 2. Because he knew what was in man's hearts. But even though that was true that he would not entrust himself to man, he entrusted himself to his Father.

It is true that he gave himself to man in disrespect, that he gave himself to die for us. Hallelujah. And that's the second part of this verse.

The great word is God loves the world. That's the great gift is that he gave his one and only Son. Gave him to live among us and to die for us.

To die for our sins. Every single one of them. Past, present and future.

The Word of God declares that Jesus in dying on the cross dealt with all of our sin, not just some of it. The Scripture declares that all of our sin was defeated, or dealt with I should say, and all of our enemies defeated. For we have an enemy of our souls.

One who seeks to destroy God's work within us. One of the reasons that Jesus came was to destroy his work. The devil's work.

Hallelujah. The great word is that God loves us. The great gift is Jesus himself.

And whoever believes in him, and that's the source, the heart, the very ground zero of salvation. Whoever believes in him will not perish. Will not be separated from God forever.

And that's the great reality of this passage. But will have eternal or everlasting life. And that eternal or everlasting life is not just life that begins after we die.

It begins the moment we believe. We end up with life with heavenly content. That's what eternal life is.

That's such an exciting concept. Life with heavenly content. Things that wouldn't normally be part of our lives as human beings become part of our lives when we put our trust in Jesus.

Now you think it's an easy thing to believe in Jesus. It's not, because by nature we cannot believe. So God must give us faith to believe.

But the wonderful thing is that just as God has given us his Son, the Bible says in Romans 8, he freely gives us all things, including the faith that we need to put our trust in Jesus. If you need faith to believe in Jesus today, God will give it to you. All you have to do is ask.

If you need to understand what God is saying through his Word, all you have to do is ask. Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find.

Knock and the door will be opened. Isn't that good news? Jesus was given to us not only to die for us, but to rise again. Given to us to live on the earth.

Given to us to die on the cross. Given to us to rise on the third day according to the Scriptures. So that he might live at the right hand of the Father and pour out the Spirit of God upon us every single day.

Given to us so that as the Spirit of Jesus, his Spirit comes to live in us, which is what happens when we believe, that God takes over our lives. Slowly, inexorably, irresistibly, God takes over our lives. Thank goodness.

Thank goodness he doesn't leave it in our hands. He is not some cosmic cheerleader who having saved us stands on the sidelines to do some wonderful dance and throw his legs up in the air in order that we might someday reach heaven, just because he encourages us. God is much more proactive than that.

He gets in on the game. He comes onto the field and he comes into our hearts and our lives and he lives for us. How exciting is that? I've never been a football player.

I think I would have been if I'd lived in North America, but I grew up where soccer rules and soccer still rules and soccer will rule. But had I grown up in North America, I might have played some football because I love that game and I'm only just really beginning to understand it and it's an incredibly powerful game. But you know, I haven't the skills.

I haven't the background. But wouldn't it be neat if suddenly, I've often thought this as I've watched it on TV, it'd be neat if suddenly you could be one of those players, if suddenly you had the skills. You didn't have to learn them, I'm not lazy, I often think about these things.

You didn't have to work for it, if suddenly it was there. I saw a movie once where this, it was one of those stupid movies about ghosts and this guy who had been a football player dies and his spirit goes into the body of another guy and he becomes a football player, this wimp. This guy who had no clue, had absolutely no ability, but suddenly he could play football and he got on the field and he was amazing, best I'd ever seen since the other guy.

But that's who it was, it was the other guy inside of him. Suddenly all of the skills were coming through, all of the abilities. But you know what? Although that was a silly story and clearly obviously not possible, that's the amazing thing that God does for us.

He doesn't stay on the sidelines, He gets into our bodies and He lives out His power, His skills, His virtues, His blessings. Isn't that amazing? That's awesome and it's weird. It's as weird as it gets, but it's wonderful.

And it all happens when we trust Jesus, when we believe that He died for us, that He rose again for us, that He paid for our sin and that He set us free. It all happens when that takes place, that transaction that the Bible talks about, where we put our trust, that moment when we believe. We confess with our mouth

that Jesus Christ is Lord.

What an amazing moment. And the Lord Jesus continues to speak in John 3 about these things. He says in verse 17, and that's where we continue this morning, for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world.

It's interesting to me that again, again Jesus says this. And it's obvious when you read His life story and it's obvious when you take time to look at His ministry, He did not come to condemn anybody. A bruised reed.

Jesus quoted this passage from the Old Testament, one of the prophets. He did not break. And what that simply means, and the reed is the word that's used in Hebrew and then in Greek is the word for bulrush.

And you've seen those bulrushes. Some of them grow along the sides of the roads here in Long Creek at the springtime. Those big, tall, ungainly plants that grow tall and then they have this thing on top that makes them top-heavy and they break easily.

A storm of wind or rain comes and you see them all broken down. And that's the picture that Jesus paints of mankind. That's the way we are.

We're tall, we're ungainly, we're unbalanced by sin and we easily break. But Jesus did not come to break us. He did not come to be the one to break that plant that is so fragile.

Hallelujah. He came to save the world. A lot of people don't like that word, save.

They think it's fanatical. But it's Jesus' word. So, you know, if you think it's fanatical, then you think Jesus was a fanatic.

And actually, I think he was. I think he was a real fanatic. He was committed to us.

He was trusting in his Father. And he was obsessed with that simple relationship of dependence. That's fanaticism.

But that's what God calls us to. And Jesus did not come to break the fragile lives that were before. And my dear, he could have seen so many lives that he could have broken because we were living in such sin.

The people who were before him were so full of sin. Remember the woman he met on the way to Samaria? She had had five husbands. She was now living in sin with a man who wasn't her husband.

Her life was a total mess. Her moral existence and her moral expression was totally unacceptable. She couldn't even go at the normal time to get water at the well because the whole community had rejected her.

She came at noontime, in the heat of the day. And isn't it fascinating that it was in that place of rejection, in that part of her life where she had no answers to give to men who would have criticized her for her moral behavior, it was right there at the point of her failure that Jesus Christ met her and did not condemn her, but brought her hope. This is what God does through His Son, the Lord Jesus.

It's what He still does. He doesn't condemn people. He brings them hope.

He didn't come into the world, condemn the world. You know, that means as preachers and as Christians, we don't need to condemn people either. And I think we lose sight of that.

And I've stressed this as we were beginning in this chapter and then partway through again, I stress this. And I don't apologize for stressing it again. We do not need to get out into people's lives and bring down the boom upon them for their failures.

We do not need to point our fingers at them and tell them how badly they're living. You know what? People know. People know for two reasons.

They know, first of all, because they have a conscience, which is a gift that God gave all of us at birth. And that conscience will tell us when we have failed. Now, the Bible also speaks about the times when we can sear or burn off of that conscience.

But until that happens, there is a conscious witness in the minds and hearts of men and women and boys and girls. They know the difference between right and wrong. Sometimes they couldn't even tell you why.

Well, when they do something wrong, their conscience bothers them. And every single one of us have experienced that. Sleepless nights, days when we've been burdened with guilt, understanding that something has happened in our lives which we know is displeasing to God.

We may not even know why it is. We may never have read a passage in the Scripture that helps us define how we have failed, but our conscience tells us so. And then there's another reason that we know.

And that's a reason that is consistently with us, even if the conscience has been seared. See, because a man's conscience has been burned off does not mean he's unreachable. For God, the Holy Spirit, still lives to speak to man's hearts.

And even into the lives of some who have lived in profligate and sinful ways. And my friends, don't start thinking about all the worst people you know. That's what we tend to do.

Oh yeah, speaking about so-and-so, he's a real bad egg. I'm talking about you. I'm talking about me.

That's what we are. We're corrupted to the core. The Bible says, there is nothing good that dwells in this flesh.

We are every one of us sinners who've fallen short of God's standard. But God looks at us and loves us. And even though there are times when we have turned our backs, even on our conscience, the Holy Spirit comes to bring us conviction.

What a beautiful thing. It says in John chapter 16, which we'll get to in about five years. You think I'm kidding.

It says in John chapter 16 that that is his function. He comes to convince and to convict man of sin. And it doesn't matter how much they resist that.

It's a beautiful thing that God does. He's able to reach even the most decimated heart and bring the sense of need to them. But not to bring them to condemnation.

If that's all he came to do, then it would be hopeless. But he brings them that sense of burden, that sense of need, that sense of their awareness that they've failed him. And then he brings them word about Jesus.

Good news. Though you have failed, though your conscience tells you, though the Holy Spirit lays it upon your soul, though you feel burdened and know that if you were to die today, you're not sure if you'd get into heaven, the good news is by Jesus Christ, there is a door by which all men can come to God. Isn't it beautiful? And Jesus said, I am the way.

I am the path. He also said, I am the door. By me, if any man will enter in, he will be rescued.

Hallelujah! He will be, not might be. By me. What a bold statement.

Some people think, well, you can never know that you're going to heaven. That's not what Jesus said. Jesus said, By me, if any man will enter in, he will be saved.

That's bold. That's fanatical. The guy was either God or a noctis.

I'm going to go with the former. He was the Lord. He was God.

He proved it in so many ways, in his words and in his actions. And he said, If by me you enter into the kingdom of God, you will be saved. Not might be.

Not possibly. Not if you try hard enough. Not if you add more good works to your lifelong existence.

Not if you try to keep all the rules and standards. No, by me. Glorious word.

And those of you that are Christians, you know that. But isn't that a glorious word? Doesn't it make your heart miss a beat? By me. Some of us tried so long in various ways and in various fashions to reach a place where we pleased God and discovered we couldn't and so it discouraged us.

Yet still we knew that we needed a Savior and then we heard the good news. By me, says Jesus. If any man will enter in, he will be saved.

I am the way, Jesus said, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me. It's exclusive.

There is no other way. We make no apology for preaching an exclusive salvation. Exclusive in the sense that it's only through Christ.

Universal in the sense that all who believe, all who enter by Him will be saved. Well, hallelujah. It's not good.

It's so simple. A child can understand it. You get to heaven by trusting Jesus, not in anything else.

You get to heaven by entering through Him. You allow Him, as it were, to carry you there. You put your whole trust in Him.

I have sat on many a seat. Many a seat has taken my weight. And if seats could talk, they might complain.

For I am a great weight. The bulk that they have to receive from me is massive. And indeed it's been true that chairs have broken under that burden.

And so through great embarrassment and terrible experience, I've learned to carefully examine a seat before I sit down. I have sat on seats and found myself on the ground. Truly.

And if you've ever had that happen to you, you know how embarrassing it is. So I look carefully. And I examine.

And I wonder. And I quietly, without anybody noticing, check the situation. I watch to see if there are people of similar bulk to me.

Who are sitting on the seats. And then I come to a conclusion. I think this seat will take me.

I think I will be okay. I don't think I'm going to end up on the floor. And that's all well and good.

But a decision has to take place. It doesn't matter if you know the seat will hold you. It doesn't matter if you're certain of the steel that has formed the frame.

It doesn't matter that you look around and you see people like you. Of great girth. Sitting on similar seats.

A decision has to be made. What is that decision? Huh? Whether you sit or not. See, it will never help my poor back if I stand and say I am confident that this seat will take me.

I am sure of its structure. I know I could depend upon its security. It will hold me up.

But I've still got a sore back. At some point I've got to turn around and rest my weary legs. And take the leap of faith.

Well, not leap. Take the move of faith. And sit down.

And actually allow this seat to carry me. Not right now. But you can sure help me later.

Yeah, but you can do that later. Okay, why don't you do it now? All right. A decision has to be made.

Now, it's the same spiritually. I may know that Jesus has died for me. I know the good word of God.

God loves me. I know the great gift of God. He gave His only Son.

I know that the Bible is true. I believe that the Bible is true. That whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal or everlasting life.

But at some point a decision has to be made. Will I rest my soul on that or religion? Will I rest my soul on that or my self-effort? Will I rest my soul on that or some other promise? Or some other person? Or some other system? No, at some point I've got to sit down and trust that Jesus will hold me up. And I have.

And He is. And many of us today can say that at some point by grace, through faith, we rest with our souls under eternal destiny, not upon our religion, but upon Jesus Christ. And He is sound, faithful.

Hallelujah. And if you haven't done that yet, a decision has to be made. You can't, you know what? You can't say, well, no, I'm not going to make a decision.

I'm going to leave it as a great uncertainty. You will make a decision. You'll make a decision whether you want to or not.

And someday your eternal destiny will be entirely dependent upon that decision. Whether you've rested your great spiritual weight, because it is great, all your sin, all your failure, all your inability to find a way to please God, all of your apathy, all of your unbelief, all of your problems, you've laid them upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And you find that He carries you.

But some of you won't. You'll stand before God someday and try to say, well, Lord, I tried my best. My friends, that will not be good enough.

Some of you will say, but I preached. And God will say, but that is not good enough. Some of you might be able to say, but I was able to share in miracles.

And God will say, but that is not good enough. The answer to our need, the decision that must be made is a decision to put Jesus in that place of our trust. Nothing else.

Do you know, we have problems when it comes to that decision. Listen to what Jesus says in verse 18. Whoever believes in Him, and He's speaking about Himself, of course, is not condemned.

There's an immediate freedom from condemnation. Hallelujah. That's why the thief on the cross who didn't live more than a couple of hours after his decision, went home to heaven.

What did Jesus say to him? Today. Today. You will be with Me in Paradise.

Now, anybody who believes that salvation is based upon the things we do, to please God, has got a problem with that verse. Because the man didn't do anything to please God. He couldn't.

He didn't have time. But he didn't, and he couldn't, but he still went to heaven because he believed in Jesus. Because he believed in Jesus.

And whoever believes is not condemned. That's what the Bible says. It's immediate.

The moment you put your trust in Christ, the moment you believe in your heart that He is Lord, and you express with your mouth that God has raised Him from the dead, or the other way around, you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead and express with your mouth that He is Lord, then you are immediately rescued. Immediately you go from death to life. Immediately you're acceptable to God.

Immediately your burden is carried and covered. But Jesus says, whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is our problem.

It's not that God condemns us. We stand condemned already. People think that God is up there waiting to condemn us.

God is not up there waiting to condemn us. We condemned ourselves long ago when we turned our backs on Him. The problem is, God is standing up there waiting to rescue us, but we will not be rescued.

The problem is, God has made a beautiful provision in giving us His Son, His love and the cross, but we will not trust in it. The problem is, God has pulled us away, but we will not walk in it. And that leaves us in condemnation.

It doesn't bring us to condemnation. You've got to understand this. You see, because again, people think, I'm going to stand before God someday, and on this side, all my good works will be piled up, and on this side, all of my bad works will be piled up, and God will weigh it up.

And if my good works outweigh my bad, then I'm going to be okay. Listen, if you start from a place of condemnation, then you'll end in a place of condemnation. God is not deciding whether or not to condemn you.

You stand condemned already if you don't believe in the Son. He's waiting to see whether you will receive His provision. He's waiting to see whether you will receive His forgiveness.

He is not waiting to condemn you. You've done that already. You were born in a place of condemnation.

You were shipped in sin and born in it. God is not going to condemn you. You're condemned now.

You were condemned the day you were born. You're condemned the day you die, unless you put your trust in Jesus, then everything changes. Do not think that God is in the business of weighing up whether we've been good enough.

It is not going to be of any interest to Him whatsoever. What will be of interest to Him is whether we have accepted His provision for our salvation. If we do, we are no longer condemned.

If we don't, we already stand in a place of condemnation. Already. Jesus hammers this home with some very powerful words in verse 19.

This is the verdict. This is the truth. This is what has already been passed down long ago by the grit judge.

Light has come into the world. But men love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. There's our grit problem.

That men love darkness rather than light. That we are condemned by our unbelief. That we are cursed because of our love for evil.

Now, you ask yourself this simple question. Whenever you watch a movie, and usually in movies, there's a good guy and there's a bad guy. Think now for a moment.

Who is it that you're attracted to most of the time? Who is it that the movie makers seem to have been able to give a character to? They've worked a long time on what this character looks like, what he talks like. Who is it that seems to make sense? Who is it that draws you? For example, the Superman movies. Christopher Reeves.

Now, when I first watched those movies, I'm a Superman fan. I grew up reading Superman comics. Just love the stuff.

But when I watched Superman, the first time I saw the movie, do you know who I liked most in the story? Max Luther. Do you know why? Because the man had character. It wasn't a good character, but he had depth.

Superman was just this sort of guy in a silk suit. I began to really question a lot of things. Who wore blue tights and high-heeled boots.

But he was so thin as a character. There was so... Now, Christopher Reeves, I mean, a good actor, but it just seemed that he didn't have... See, he was good. And it's very hard to present someone who's good.

But somebody who's bad, man, you can really get into that. Why is that? The new series called Smallville, that's about Superman in his youth. The actor who plays Superman is a wimp.

I mean, he's handsome and all that. And right now he doesn't wear blue tights, which is a good thing. But you know the actor in the story now, who's the strongest and he's getting all the best reviews? Max Luther.

Why? Because it's good to be able to draw character into a person. And it seems that we're all drawn to the characters who've got a tinge of evil about them. When you see a movie, this is where it really stands out.

And really, these movies reflect our culture. When you see a movie about Jesus, it's even worse. And there are some movies about Jesus which are excellent, some which I recommend.

The Jesus movie, for example, is now the most viewed movie anywhere at any time in the history of moviemaking. Did you know that? More people have seen the Jesus movie than any other movie. Any other movie.

After that, you have that one about E.T. Call Home. That's the second most viewed movie in history. But the Jesus movie is the first.

But you know what? The Jesus who's there, he's really hard to read. Because he's no character. He's just this sort of cardboard figure who keeps quoting Bible verses.

And you look at his lips and he's not even moving with the words sometimes. It's like dubbed in and it really just gives you no confidence. But the people you remember from that movie are people like the guy that betrayed the Lord Jesus.

He stands out. See, even for us, as we depict people dramatically, it's easier for us to define evil than it is for us to define good because we're drawn to evil. Now, put it down into your own life.

What is it that you're attracted to on a daily basis? What do you do whenever the world vision adverts come on with starving little faces before you? Well, if you're like me, you turn it off and you get back to superman. And I don't think I'm the only one who does that. I hope I'm not.

But I know I'm not. How many of you have taken time or taken your money in a sacrificial way in order to feed the poor? Watch the neat ad by the Rotary Club. One of the best I've seen in a long time.

Tom, wherever he is. In the Rotary Club. There he is.

About the need for giving health care to those who are on the streets. It's just started to be shown how the Rotary Club has established a moving clinic. One of the questions they ask in this ad that I watched last night was, do you really care about those who are homeless? Or do you think they need to help themselves? Of course, immediately, I said that.

Do you really care about the needs of the homeless? Or do you think they just need to get a real job? Or just any job? And you think, oh, I said that. And I have. I've been on the street when somebody has stuck their hand out in front of me and said, hey, you got any change to spare? And I've walked by.

That was another question. Do homeless people become invisible to you? Ooh, that hurts. Why is that? Because the verdict is already down.

Because it's clear, because God has said it for centuries, we love darkness rather than light. We consistently choose the wrong actions. We consistently express the wrong attitudes.

Instead of helping, we criticize. Instead of reaching out a hand to give, we take. Instead of selflessness, there is selfishness.

It's born in us, it's bred in us, and it's in us from the beginning. I've often said, and I have to be very careful because my children are now older, but I never had to teach my children to be bad. They have a natural gift for that.

And I bet that it's true for your kids, too. Never had to teach them to be bad. You have to try and teach them to be good.

Why is that? Because we are naturally bent toward wickedness. Man loved darkness rather than light. And the verdict has come down.

It's not that, you know, this is such an important phrase. There's not going to be a verdict someday in heaven. Some people really believe God will someday bring down the verdict.

He'll weigh it all up and he'll decide. This is the verdict. It's already come down.

It came down centuries ago, eons ago. Man loved darkness rather than light, for their deeds are evil. Now, that's our problem when it comes to the wonderful good news.

The thing is, we want to naturally go in the wrong direction. Light has come into the world, but man loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. You know, it's amazing to me.

I've had people say to me, and no doubt they will soon again as we see incredible global events erupt around us, and many will die. Why? How many of you heard this question? Why did God not do something about that? How many have heard that question? You know, it'd be even more interesting to say how many of us have asked that question. Why did God not do something? And I am always fascinated by that question because often it comes from those who in their own lives are not willing for God to do anything.

And I'm always tempted to say, but I don't have the guts. Most of the time I don't have the guts. When someone says to me, why did God let these children die? 40,000 children will die today.

Never mind the decimation that could come in Iraq tomorrow. 40,000 children will die today. And people will ask me, why will God not step in and do something about the problems of mankind? And always I'm tempted to say, He will.

He'll step into your life and He'll give you hope if you'll turn away from your sinfulness and your selfishness and give your life to Jesus Christ. Will you let Him do that? Oh no, I don't want that nonsense. That's too fanatical.

I don't need this born again stuff. I don't want God interfering in my life. How many of you have heard, this is my life.

I'll decide what to do with it. Yet the very same people will say, why will God not step in? I mean, it just doesn't make sense. If you want God to step in to the problems of humankind, you've got to allow Him to step in to your life.

Okay, it's okay. Let Him step into Biafra. Let Him step into Afghanistan.

Let Him step into Iraq. But don't let Him step in here because we love darkness rather than light. And that's the crazy thing.

The very things that destroy us are the things we are drawn to. The very things that eat us away from the inside out are the very things that we want. The very things that will destroy our souls and leave us without hope and without God in this world and in the next are the very things that we want and we don't want God to interfere on that level.

But that's where God changes the world. That is where God brings help to the human condition and to the problem of evil in your life and in mine, one person at a time. But we've got a problem because it says that we love darkness and it says that we resist the light.

Listen to what it says then a little further down. First it says in verse 20, Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear his deeds will be exposed. We've covered that.

I want to finish with verse 21. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. Whoever lives by the light.

Some of your translations have a very poor expression here. Whoever does what is right. That's not what this verse says.

Whoever lives by the light. The words that are used here, the verb that's put in place is a verb about cause and effect. What this verse is saying, whoever lives because of the light.

Because my friends, we won't live apart from ourselves. We won't live at all unless the light works a miracle upon us. Unless Jesus does something to change our direction, the verdict is already dying.

We love darkness rather than light. We will not come into the light for fear that our deeds will be exposed. But those who live by the light, because of the light, through the light, because the light comes to them, will step into the light so that all that they have done will be plainly seen to be done through God.

Hallelujah. There is a point where God comes to us and we live because of the light. We live because the light has touched us.

We live because the light has revealed Himself to us. We live because the light of the world comes to live in us. We sit upon Him and trust Him.

Then all of the good things that happen in our lives, we can plainly give God the glory because it's plainly seen that they come from Him, not from us. The only thing that comes from us is darkness. What comes from Him is light.

But you have to live by the light. And that's not your responsibility. We can't live by the light.

The very verse before this has said that we cannot live by the light. We cannot do it ourselves. We love darkness, therefore we will not come into the light.

We fear that our deeds will be exposed. And yet the very next phrase says, but those who live by the light will come into the light. Is it a contradiction? No, it's those who live because of the light.

Those who live because Jesus comes to them and changes them. And those of us today who are living in the light, who are allowing God to live through them, those of us who put our trust in Jesus, we did not make that decision ourselves. We couldn't.

We did not seek to come to Him ourselves. We haven't the power. We did not turn away from wickedness because we want to turn to wickedness.

We changed because Jesus came, because the Spirit came and touched us, because light from heaven shone upon us, and suddenly we saw what was true. He turned us around, and by grace He led us to Himself. And so today we can say, Hallelujah, God has done this.

There are no Christians who are true Christians today who will stand up and say, I'm a Christian because I'm a good man. Because there are no good men who are Christians. No good women who are Christians.

We're Christian because we live by the light. Because somehow in His mercy, God decided to reach into our hearts. To rescue us.

I want to baptize Erica in half an hour or so. She did not decide to follow Jesus. Jesus met her and drew her in mercy to Himself.

And she lives because of the light shining on her. You can too. All you have to say is, Lord Jesus, shine on me.

All you have to do is act in the faith that God gives you and believe. And pour out your burden upon Him. Will you do that today? If you do, it's only because God has touched you.

It won't be because I've convinced you. It won't be because of any decision you make. It'll be because you live by the light.

Because of the light. If I were to say, how many of us live today because of the light? A great many of us could put our hands up or stand and say, I live because of the light. Not because I'm good.

But because Jesus touched me. We give God the glory for all the good things that are coming out of our lives. Consequently, all the changes that have taken place, and many of us are still changing.

It's God at work. It's not us. We give Him all the glory today.

We'll stand in a few minutes in the water and in a visual aid say, yes, Erica used to be this way, but now just as someone goes into the grave, as she goes down in the water, her whole life, the old way is ended. Because she's been touched by the light as she comes up out of the water. It's like someone who rises from the dead.

She's got a whole new life and she's washed clean to start anew by Jesus Christ. Isn't that wonderful? I hope it's true for you. I hope it's true for you today.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for being with us today. Thank you for the good news of the gospel.

Thank you that you have reached us. Because Lord, the verdict is we love darkness rather than light, and we always turn to it. But those of us who put our trust in Jesus can say, as much today as we did the day we were rescued, we believe that Jesus is our Savior today.

There may be some today who for the first time need to say, I believe that Jesus is my Savior. No one else. Nothing else.

Just Him. Grant them the faith to do so. By your love and grace, touch them so that they can say, like Erica can say today, I've been touched.

I live because of the light. Grant it to many here today, and even this morning, because we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

We'll receive your offering. Then we're going to sing a song in closing.

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