

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

JOHN 3:14-16 • TV129A

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By
HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Baptist Church
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Pikeville, KY 41501

John 3:14-16

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

I want you to open your Bible with me to the **3rd** chapter of the book **of John**. I’m going to be reading two verses of Scripture from **John** the **3rd** chapter and we will read **verses 14 and 15**.

Some time ago a listener wrote in and he expressed appreciation for the fact that I gave you time to find the Scriptures in your Bible and follow along while I read and while I try to point out the particular things about that portion of God’s Word.

So, we will try to give you the time to find the text because I do want you to read it and I want you to follow me as I bring the message today on the subject: **“PREACHING THE GOSPEL.”**

Now, I’ve got a big subject; but we will ask the Spirit of God to give us some liberty and understanding and wisdom as I bring this message on: **“PREACHING THE GOSPEL.”**

Now, **John chapter 3 verses 14 and 15:** *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so, must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

Now, the preaching of the Gospel is the strength of any church and it's the principle task of every preacher and of every believer. I say unto you that no church can survive without strong, Gospel preaching.

The apostle Paul said: *“Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.”* And again he said: *“If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed.”* The preaching of the Gospel is the strength of the church; it's the principle task of every believer.

Now, through the preaching of the Gospel men are saved. The Scripture tells us in **1 Corinthians** that *“God hath chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* It's through preaching that men are saved: *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth (or through the word of truth).”*

Peter said: *“We are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever.”* So, it's through preaching the Gospel that men are saved.

Paul said in **Romans 1:16:** *“For I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”* So, it's through preaching, preaching the Gospel that men are brought to knowledge of Christ.

Then, faith comes through the preaching of the Gospel. What does **Romans 10:17** tell us? *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*

When our Lord sent His disciples out to preach he told them *“to go and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned,”* so, faith cometh through the preaching of the Gospel.

Spiritual growth comes through the preaching of the Gospel. Peter said: *“Desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby.”* Grow how? *“You grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ,”* you grow into maturity.

And then comfort comes through the preaching of the Gospel. The apostle Paul writing in **1 Thessalonians 4**, talking about the resurrection of the dead and those who slept in Christ; when he finished talking about Christ coming again and people being raised and going to meet the Lord in the air, Paul said; *“Comfort one another with these words.”* It's by the preaching of the Word of God that men are comforted.

Then assurance comes through the preaching of the Gospel. The apostle John says: *“These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

So, this business of preaching is important. This business of preaching is the principle task of every believer and it's the strength of the church because through the preaching of the Gospel men are saved.

Through the preaching of the Gospel God is glorified. Through the preaching of the Gospel faith is born. Through the preaching of the Gospel men grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ.

Through the preaching of the Gospel those who are undergoing great trial, bereavement and sorrow, are comforted.

And then, assurance comes through the preaching of the Gospel.

But, my friend; true preaching is more than mere words. Writing in **1 Thessalonians 1** Paul said: *"Knowing brethren, beloved, and your election of God: for our gospel came not to you in word only but in power in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance."*

So, true preaching is more than words. A lot of people think because a man stands up and hollers really loud that he is preaching or because he stands up and can't get his breath and saying things so fast nobody can understand what he is saying, and just hollers "hallelujah or praise the Lord, or blessed Jesus" once in a while, he's doing some good preaching.

But, preaching is not just words; preaching is communicating, it's communicating. It's not just words, it's communicating with the mind and with the heart. True preaching is born of experience.

Listen to John; he said: *"That which we've seen and heard declare we unto you."* Our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ and we are declaring unto you that which we have experienced, that which we have seen, and that which we have heard.

That's what I am trying to do in this message today. I'm telling you what I have seen, not with these eyes, but with eyes of faith, and what I've heard, not with these ears. I've not heard any voices. I've not seen any visions.

First of all: In the Word of God I've seen Christ and in the Word of God I have heard Him speak. So, true preaching is born of experience!

Secondly: True preaching is a declaration of God's Word! Paul instructing young Timothy says, *"Preach the Word."* "That's your responsibility Timothy to preach the Word, not what you think it ought to say, not what you've heard that is says, but you are to preach the Word."

"For all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "So, you get busy preaching the Word. That's your task, that's your responsibility, to preach the Word."

Thirdly: True preaching presents a person! It presents not the preacher. Paul said: *“We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord. We preach Christ and him crucified.”* True preaching presents the Lord Jesus Christ in His person, in His work, in His glory, and in His righteousness.

Preaching is a presentation of Christ. Preaching is a declaration of Christ. Preaching is the proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If a man does not preach Christ he’s not preaching.

Fourthly: True preaching is sent of God! Over in **Romans 10:13** the Scripture says: *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved: for how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?”*

True preachers are sent of God. True preachers are God’s messengers. Paul said: *“We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ.”* Just as America sends an ambassador to England or to France or to Spain or to some foreign country to represent this nation; God almighty has His ambassador; He has His messenger.

What was said of John the Baptist? It says that when they had introduced him *“there was a man sent from God whose name was John.”*

Fifthly: True preaching will produce results! Now, you may not understand what I’m saying but I want you to give it a try. True preaching will always produce results, not necessarily the results we want, and not necessarily the results we expect.

But true preaching, if a man is preaching Christ, if a man is preaching the Gospel, and if the Holy Spirit of God is attending that preaching with power it’s going to get results because God said, *“My word shall not return unto me void. It shall accomplish that whereunto I have sent it.”*

So, God’s Word always gets results if it’s preached in its truthfulness, if it’s preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, if it’s preached to men as they are, picturing God’s redemption as it is in Christ; it will get results.

For Paul said: *“We are a savor, (now not a Saviour), but a savor, a smell unto those that believe a sweet smell of life: unto those who do not believe death upon death.”*

In other words; we have a message that produces justification and it adds to condemnation. We have a message that brings men to faith and a message that increases condemnation to rebels, for a man who hears the word of his Lord and doeth it not *“shall be beaten with many stripes.”*

Sixthly: True preaching is communicating with the mind and with the heart, not with one apart from the other, not with the other apart from the one, but the mind and the heart!

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

So, this thing of preaching, it's sent of God. It presents Christ; it's born of experience. It's the Word that we preach. It produces results and it is communicating.

It's not filling in time, it's not just acting religious, it's not calling attention to ourselves; it's communicating with the heart and the mind of our hearers.

Now, in our text that I read to you a few moments ago; the Lord Jesus Christ preached the Gospel to a man. He said: *"I speak that which I know. I speak the things which I have seen."*

This man was a very religious man. His name was Nicodemus and our Lord Jesus Christ communicated with him. He talked to the man's mind and he talked to the man's heart and he talked with him concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

As he talked to Nicodemus about these things concerning the kingdom of God, he illustrated them. He talked in a language that the man, at least in his head, could understand.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not talk of the doctrine of regeneration, though he did. He was speaking of regeneration but he did not identify it as the doctrine of regeneration; he talked to this man about a new birth.

Although Nicodemus didn't understand how, he did understand what the Lord was saying. He wouldn't understand how, he said: *"How can a man enter his mother's womb and be born again?"*

He didn't understand how but he did know what Christ was talking about, a new birth, a new life, a new beginning, a new person and a new creature. That is what Christ was talking about. He said: *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not, that I say unto you: you must be born again."*

Then our Lord did not talk to Nicodemus about the doctrine of sanctification. He talked to him rather about cleansing, about *"the water"*. He said: *"We are born of the Spirit and of the water."*

The water here is the Word of God. I'm just sure of that. Over in the **Book of Psalms** it says: *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways by taking heed to the word of God."*

In the new birth the Holy Spirit is the agent and the Word is the seed. We see that all the way through the Word, how that through the Word of God, that the Word is the seed, the seed of spiritual life and the Holy Spirit is the agent.

So, he says: *"We are born of the water, the Word, and the Spirit of God."* This is regeneration and this is sanctification.

Then, when our Lord talked about the Holy Spirit, He described Him, illustrated Him by the wind. He said: *“The wind; you can hear it and you can feel it’s affects but you can’t tell where it comes from. You can’t tell where it’s going: even so, are those that are born of the Spirit of God.”* The Spirit of God begets whom He will. *“The Son quickeneth whom he will.”* The Spirit of God comes among us and even upon us and even in us and you can hear, you can hear the sound, and you can see the results.

You can feel the impression and the influence and you can hear the voice and see by faith but you don’t know where He’s coming from and you don’t know where He is going. You don’t know whom the Lord will awaken or quicken or bring to faith in Christ.

Seventh: Then he illustrated the Gospel! Our Lord talked of the new birth. He talked of cleansing; he talked about the Holy Spirit and the sovereignty of God in awakening sinners and the sovereignty of God in saving men.

And when he illustrated the Gospel and he said to Nicodemus: *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

Now Nicodemus; his background gave him sufficient information in that he knew about the people in the wilderness. He knew about their murmurings and rebellion.

He knew about Moses’ prayer for their deliverance. He knew about God giving the brazen serpent, the serpent of brass. He knew about that serpent being lifted up upon a pole and he knew that those people looked to that serpent and lived. So, our Lord took him back to that.

You see; the Master is the Master. When He talked to this man Nicodemus about the new birth and about the new spiritual life and about the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and He talked to Him about redemption and then He illustrated.

That’s what I am going to try to do right now. Let me, (and most of us like Nicodemus have a religious background and some traditions and ceremonies to which we are holding) let me preach if I can to you the Gospel that our Lord preached to Nicodemus.

You know about the people of Israel in the wilderness. You know about the fiery serpents and the brazen serpent and the people looking and living; you know that. But let me if I can and may the Holy Spirit give you faith to believe and understanding to lay hold upon, and me the wisdom to preach: *“He that believeth on the Son hath life.”*

First of all: The people in the wilderness!

Because of their sins against God; they were a murmuring people. They were a rebelling people and because of that murmuring and because of their rebellion, God in judgment sent fiery serpents among the people.

I don't know what type of serpent this was, except it was a serpent. It was a fiery serpent; the sting of that serpent was a fiery sting. It might have been like the small coral snakes over in the Orient. Their poison is so rapid that it kills a person in a matter of minutes.

But God sent fiery serpents among the people and they were bitten. You couldn't see any marks on them. They hadn't been slaughtered, they hadn't been cut to pieces; their bones were not broken. They appeared to be healthy, normal, people.

But this poison, the poison of the serpent was inside and just making its rounds through their veins, just going to their heart, being pumped out in every part of their body. They were totally diseased from the top of their heads to the soul of their feet by the venom that had been injected into their veins and consequently into their hearts by the bite of this fiery, burning, killing, serpent.

Secondly: Now then; what's that got to do with me and you?

Go back to the Garden of Eden and look at the rebellion of our parents Adam and Eve, and there as a result of their fall; the whole human race was stung with sin.

The sting of death is sin and its poison, just like those people in the wilderness that were bitten by that little fiery serpent and that poison went into their veins and was pumped all over their bodies by their heart; just as that poison is throughout their inward being, even so, the poison of sin is in us from birth.

David said: *"In sin my mother conceived me. I was shapen in iniquity. I was brought forth speaking lies."* In sin, *"Therefore, by one man sin entered the world and death by sin so death passed upon all men."*

This sin with which we are plagued is not just an outward force. It's not just an activity or an environment or a surrounding, but it flows through our nature. This sin is in us, it's in our veins, it's in our hearts, in our minds, it's in our souls, and it's in our imagination: As Isaiah said: *"The whole head is sick; the whole heart is faint."*

We have no cure. Just as these people out there in the wilderness had no cure, they were bitten and the poison was within them. If it had been a sore on the skin, it could have been mollified with ointment. If it had been a cut it could have been sowed up.

If it had been a broken bone, it could have been set. It was a poison in the veins. It was a poison in the innermost being, in the very bowels of that person. It killed from within.

That's what's wrong with the human race; we've got poison in our veins. We've got poison in our souls. We've got poison in our mind. We've got poison in our imagination.

The easiest thing in the world for a human being to do is to sin. The hardest thing in the world for a human being to do is walk in godliness. There is no cure!

Moses couldn't help them. The law couldn't help them. They couldn't help one another. They couldn't help themselves so Moses turned to the Lord and he said: "*What are we going to do? The people are dying.*" they would all die. This bite is fatal. The fiery serpent is going to destroy all the people.

So God told Moses to take a serpent of brazen, a brass serpent, made just like the ones that had bitten the people, in the very image and likeness of those serpents and put it up upon a pole and God said, "*Whosoever looks, will live.*"

Now, what was the serpent that he lifted up? It was made in the likeness of the fiery serpent. Moses saw one of them and he made a serpent of brass just like the one that had bitten the people.

When the Lord Jesus Christ came down here to this earth to be our Saviour, our sin-offering, our Redeemer; "*he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.*" It was flesh that damned us and it was the flesh of Christ that saved us.

You see; it was a serpent that poisoned the people. It was a serpent; by a serpent came death and by a serpent came life. In **1 Corinthians 15:21** says: "*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. In Adam we died, in the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we live.*"

Our Lord Jesus Christ was made of a woman just like you and me, made under the law, just like you and me, "*bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, in the likeness of sinful flesh, he hungered, he thirsted, he wearied, and he wept.*" Our Lord was a man; He was the God-man.

But, you can see Moses out there as he looks at those serpents and he makes one just like them, just like them, as a picture of Christ, you see. Our Lord Jesus Christ came down here to this earth and by the sting of the serpent those people were made sick, by the serpent were they made whole.

By man came death: "*By Adam's disobedience many were made sinners. By the obedience of one man many were made righteous.*"

Now note this: That serpent was of brass; it wasn't gold and it wasn't silver; it was brass, it was common and it was humble. Our Lord Jesus Christ was made as a common, humble, man. "*There was no beauty about him that we should desire him.*"

There was no luxury or no fanciness; He was just a carpenter. He was born in a manger. He was the lowest of all so that the lowest of all could be identified with him.

Thirdly: What was to be done with the serpent?

God said: “*Moses; make a serpent like the one that’s bitten the people and lift it up on a pole. It must be lifted up.*” Moses took the serpent and put it on a pole and lifted it up. Our Lord Jesus Christ said in **John 12:32**, “*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me.*”

This Christ said, signifying, what death he should die. All the way through the Old Testament Scripture is pictured the Lord Jesus Christ; His coming, His sacrifice and His sin-offering. His substitutionary work is pictured all through the Bible.

When Abel brought that lamb and shed its blood and put it on the altar; that’s a picture of Christ. Cain brought the works of his hands and the labor in the field but Abel brought a lamb.

When Abraham took Isaac on Mount Moriah to sacrifice him to God as God had instructed him, and the Lord told him: “*touch not the lad*” and there was a ram caught in the thicket and he put the ram on the altar and took Isaac off, that’s Christ in type and picture, the lamb of God that takes our place and dies in our stead.

The Passover Lamb, when Israel was in Egypt and God told them at midnight he would pass over and the first born of every home would die for them to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorpost; that’s a picture Christ.

And here, when Moses lifted up this serpent on a pole between heaven and earth; that’s Christ. That’s a picture of Christ. You see, the whole Old Testament is Christ in promise; God promised He would come.

In prophecy; He prophesied that He would come and in picture God showed how He would come and how He would die and how He would redeem us and how He would satisfy the justice and righteousness of God and how He would put away sin as a substitute.

Christ is lifted up. How is Christ lifted up?

First of all: He was lifted up when wicked men nailed him to a cross; He was lifted up!

Here’s the man in the likeness of sinful flesh, dying for sin in the flesh. He was lifted up as He was nailed to that tree. He was lifted up when the Father raised Him from the dead and exalted Him on high.

Secondly: He is lifted up when we preach Him in His true character, in His true redemptive glory, as truly the Lord and Saviour.

I am lifting up Christ right now; I am lifting up Christ just like Moses lifted up that serpent in the wilderness, as the ambassador of Christ, I am lifting up to you my friend who has been bitten by the fiery serpents of sin.

I am telling you to look to Christ and live.

We lift Him up. We don't wrap Him up in mysterious words that people can't understand. We don't hide Christ from among our cold, dried, dead-letter doctrines.

We don't put Him in a cradle and bring him out at Christmas time every year. We don't put Him off in some musty temple or cathedral and invite people to come and burn candles to Him. We don't advance Him and put Him out yonder in the future kingdom somewhere; we lift Him up right now, right now.

Here is the cure; sin is the cause and Christ is the cure. Here's the remedy; sin is the disease and Christ is the remedy. Here's the death; sin is the death and Christ is the life and He said: "*you look and live, look and live.*"

Fourth: All right, last of all, what are the people to do? They are to look!

**"I have a message from the Lord hallelujah
This message to you I give.
It's recorded in his Word hallelujah
It's only that you look and live."**

Moses didn't say: "Look to me; he said look to the serpent." Every preacher and every person who declares the message of salvation tells the people to look to Christ. Don't look to me, don't look to the law, don't look to your church, don't look to your denomination, and don't look to your mom and daddy; look to Christ, look to Christ.

It's not "Prepare yourself:" but look:

**"Let not conscience make you linger
Nor a fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness Christ requireth
Is to feel your need of him."**

It's not work, its look, look:

**"In my hands no price I bring
Simply to the cross of Christ I cling
Could my tears forever flow?
Could my zeal no languor know?
These for sin could never atone
Christ must save and Christ alone."**

And I say unto you; it is not even understand, it's look.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

JOHN 3:14-16 • HENRY T. MAHAN

You are to believe the Gospel not understand it. I say you are to believe it. Read the record written. Believe the Redeemer given. Believe the ransom paid. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”*

What is the command? *“If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me.”* You look and live!