

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 2



HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

Scripture Text: John 3:14-20

A light attitude toward God, held by many, assumes that if we do nothing extremely bad, all will be well in the end, because God is love, and even though we fall short of His will, He'll understand and say well done. Others teach once saved, always saved, regardless of the life that follows. Some appear to think that the Bible is all promises of reward, and everyone is sure of something good.

On the other hand, some live in fear, picturing God as counting transgressions so as to punish to the limit. Some think there is no victory over sin in this life. All of these are distorted views of the truth. God gives warnings to turn us to the promises. Belief in Christ is essential to salvation.

MEMORY VERSE: *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.— John 3:16*

A Type of Our Believing

John 3:14-15 As Moses lifted up the serpent. **Numbers 21:4-9** records the event referred to. Read it. **Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.** These words show a comparison, two events compared as similar. The first event is a type of the second. In what points are they similar? (1) The Israelites faced physical death. We face spiritual death. (2) Sin caused Israel's trouble. Sin brought our lost condition. (3) The brass image Moses lifted on a pole was of an evil thing, a poisonous serpent. The Son of man lifted on the Cross was an evil thing too, for it was a curse to be hanged on a tree or cross. He was made **to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.** Jesus was **made a curse for us** that He might redeem us from the curse (**2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13**). (4) The snake-bitten ones were to look upon the brazen serpent. Sinners are to believe in Christ crucified. Their looking involved both belief of and obedience to God's promise. What a great promise! (5) God offered His loving mercy. The Israelites who looked were given physical life. Sinners who believe and look to Christ are given spiritual life. (6) The promise to Israel was conditional—only those who looked received. The promise to us is conditional—only those who believe receive. On this precious promise hangs the fulfillment of all the other promises concerning man's life and happiness (**Romans 8:32**).

The Basis for and Result of Believing

John 3:16 **For God so loved the world.** The basis for our believing is God's great love that made the way for us. It was nothing we had or were or did. Why did He love the world of mankind so ruined by sin? Because of the value He set upon a soul. A soul is the creation of God—of His own making. A soul is capable of eternal enjoyment or eternal suffering. We can read and explain some reasons for God's concern for us, but we can never understand the extreme love that pressed Him to the point of giving His only Son to save us. He gave Him not only as a Friend but as a Savior, not only as a holy Example but as a sin-bearing Sacrifice. He gave Him not only to stoop to live as a human in a sinful world, but to die a shameful death at the hands of those He came to save—His own creation. Men not only killed their Savior, but their Creator also. Such love and giving is beyond our comprehension. But we need not understand to receive, just believe—believe that the Son of God died in our place.

Man is perishing, that is, dying as the result of a process of ruin. Sin does not strike man down in sudden death; it causes him to perish. He dies as a result of slow moral and spiritual deterioration. His senses become

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hardened; his soul starves to death; his life disintegrates, and spiritual putrefaction sets in. It is to save us from this process of progressive deterioration that God did something of immeasurable significance. **He gave his only begotten Son** that perishing man could **have everlasting life**.

What does believing in Jesus Christ do for one? It brings life to the dead soul. Souls are dead because of sin. Accepting His sacrifice for oneself saves from sin. This gives life—eternal life—to the dead soul. Eternal life means not only life which goes on forever, but life which is lived in continuing fellowship with God. Only Jesus Christ the Son of God can give this. **There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12)**. Truly, this is the greatest promise ever made.

God's Motive

John 3:17 Not to condemn but to save—for this, God sent His Son. How different this is from the concept heathens hold of their gods. They think their gods to be full of wrath and vengeance that must be appeased by gifts, sacrifices, and sufferings. Even some who call themselves Christian try to appease God's wrath by repeated prayers, good works, and sufferings of penance. But God's desire is not to punish but to give life if we will take it. We can come to Him, not in fear and terror, but in trust. God's love—that is His motive—such a perfect love that no love on earth can be compared with it.

Believing Removes Condemnation

John 3:18-20 **He that believeth on him is not condemned**. Many are condemned, lost, headed for hell, just because they have **not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God**. Condemnation does not wait for us to do some excessively wicked act. No, all are NOW condemned who have not actively trusted in Christ. Christ is light. Men turn down Christ, **and this is the condemnation, that light is come . . . and men loved darkness . . .** So belief removes condemnation, and unbelief brings condemnation. To escape condemnation, one must turn to Christ in repentance and belief.

The Lifting of Christ

As the serpent was lifted on the pole before the people, so Christ was lifted on a Cross of shame. When He said, **And I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men**, He meant if He would be honored in our lives, He would draw others in faith to Himself (**John 12:32-33**). We lift Christ in honor when we honor and obey His Word—His Word is truth. The work of the Church of God is to lift Christ for all to see (**1 Timothy 3:15**).

JUST A THOUGHT

**"A love that looks upward, we term adoration;
A love that looks level, we know as affection;
But a love that descends—that is grace."**

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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