

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 34

John 3:18 "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

.....John 3:18-19)

BELIEVING AND NOT BELIEVING

INTRODUCTION

The necessity of believing on and in Christ has been grossly understated in our day – even though there are an astounding number of statements on this subject. Ponder what is said about the person whom believes “on” or “in” Christ: *"He that believeth on Him is not condemned"* (John 3:18). *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"* (John 3:36). *"He that believeth on Me shall never thirst"* (John 6:35). *"He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:38). *"He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"* (John 11:25). *"He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me"* (John 12:44). *"He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father"* (John 14:12). *"He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded"* (1 Pet 2:6). *"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1 John 5:5). *"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"* (1 John 5:10). Any religious system that claims an association with Christ, yet fails to stress the ongoing necessity and benefits of believing on Him and having faith in Him, is spurious, unauthentic, and to be forthrightly abandoned. Placing the doctrinal stress upon such things as what believers are called, how to worship God, how to win souls, and humanly devised methods of living, is simply wrong. The less necessary it is to delineate Christ Jesus, the more false a doctrine is. All of God’s favorable dealings with men– all of them –are filtered through the Person and ministry of Jesus Christ. As simplistic as that may seem, the church has had a difficult time keeping its focus upon Christ Jesus, even from the days of the apostles. There have also been other Christ’s invented and perpetrated by men (2 Cor 11:4; Matt 24:24). In addition, there has been a disciplined approach to spiritual life that has caused churches to leave their *"first love"* (Rev 2:4). It has been said of others, that their religion has left Jesus on the outside of their assembly, who sought for someone within that assembly who would open the door to Him (Rev (3:20). You will find the centrality of Jesus Christ expounded with great power and specificity in every epistle. We are not addressing a peripheral issue here, but are at the core of man’s identity with Christ.

HE THAT BELIEVETH ON HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED

John 3:18 "He that believeth on Him is not condemned . . ."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELIEVE ON HIM? *"He that believeth on Him."* Other

versions read, *"believes in Him,"* ^{NKJV} *"has faith in Him,"* ^{BEB} *"trust in Him,"* ^{CJB} *"who trust Him to save them,"* ^{LIVING} *"who commits himself to Jesus,"* ^{IE} *"trusting in Him,"* ^{ABP} *"has faith in God's Son,"* ^{CEV} *"who clings to, trusts in, relies on Him."* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *"believing into Him."*
LITV and INTERLINEAR

The point here is not intellectual assent, but identity with the Christ. Elsewhere John equates believing on His name with receiving Him: *"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name"* (John 1:12). Concerning believing on Christ it is also written, *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, **which effectually worketh also in you that believe**"* (1 Thess 2:13). Peter told those at the house of Cornelius, *"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name **whosoever believeth in Him** shall receive remission of sins"* (Acts 10:43). Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome concerning the imputation of righteousness: *"to whom it shall be imputed, **if we believe on Him** that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead"* (Rom 4:24). There is also Divine activity in believing: *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to **believe on Him**, but also to suffer for his sake"* (Phil 1:29).

I am going to affirm that believing on Him is the catalyst for having *"faith in the operation of God"* (Col 2:12). It works like this: God has deposited all of the resources need for salvation in Christ Jesus. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him (Col 2:9), and it is *"of His fulness that we all receive"* (John 1:16). It is by means of our faith that we are *"joined to the Lord"* (1 Cor 6:17), becoming one with Him, and *"called into the fellowship"* of Jesus (1 Cor 1:9). Once joined to the Lord by means of our faith, all of the resources He possesses are accessible to us. Believing on Him describes everything that is involved in being added to the Lord, abiding in Him, and living unto Him (2 Cor 5:15).

As I have indicated before, the word "believeth" is in the active mode. It is not referring to a time in the past when we believed, nor is it a step in a supposed plan of salvation. This is referring to the person who *"**IS** believing on Christ"* – who **IS** relying upon Christ, who **IS** depending upon Christ, and who **IS** living for Christ. This is the person who **IS** living by faith, and who **IS** in fellowship with Christ. It is the person in whom Jesus is manifesting Himself (John 14:21), and in whom both the Father and the Son have taken up residence (John 14:23). It is good to remember *"when we believed"* (Rom 13:11). However this promise has to do with presently believing – or continuing in the faith (Col 1:23).

IS NOT CONDEMNED. Other versions read, *"is not judged,"* ^{NASB} *"does not come up to be judged,"* ^{BEB} *"isn't judged,"* ^{CEB} *"are not judged"* ^{CJB} *"No one who believes in Him will be judged,"* ^{NJB} *"no judgment against anyone,"* ^{NLT} *"There is no eternal doom awaiting,"* ^{LIVING} *"does not come up for judgment,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"does not come up for judgment,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"No one who believes in Him has to come up for judgment,"* ^{GOODSPEED} *"is acquitted,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"he who trusts in Him never comes up for judgment."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Some of the versions confuse the text by using the word *"judgment."* The Word of God makes clear that no man will be exempted from judgment (Acts 17:31; Rom 14:11,12; 1 Cor 3:13; 4:5; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1,8; Heb 9:27; 1 John 4:17; Rev 20:13; 22:12). *"Condemned"* is the proper word to be used here. Further, it is in the present tense:—i.e. *"**IS** not being."* ^{INTERLINEAR} The thought is this: *"The one who is believing on Christ is not condemned."* God is not against such a person, and he is not in a state of condemnation. In other words, such a person can live with *"the full assurance of hope"*

(Heb 6:11), confident that if he died, he will be absent from the body and present with the Lord, or if he is alive and remains unto the coming of the Lord, he will be gathered with all other saints unto the Lord (2 Thess 2:1).

In confirmation of this present *"not condemned"* status, apostolic doctrine speaks clearly to those who are living by faith. *"There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Rom 8:1). Those who are living by faith, implicitly relying on Christ, are assured they have been *"made . . . accepted in the Beloved"* (Eph 1:6) – and God will not condemn those who are *"accepted."*

Because men have structured flawed views on a perverted view of *"no condemnation,"* I want to stress that this is a commentary of one's **present** status. As demonstrated in Adam and Eve, Cain, Israel, and Judas, one's status can change! Spiritual life must always be viewed in the present tense, or in the contemporary mode. No person who is living for self can have true confidence before God, nor can those who quench and grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19), and provoke God by sloven spiritual manners. All of this accents that the new birth, while it does take place at a specific time, is not an end of itself. It is the beginning of newness of life, not its consummation. That life is intended to be brought to maturity, and as we walk in the newness of life, the assurance of these words of Jesus will buoy up our faith by bring assurance to us.

HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY

"^{18B} . . . but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The gravity of this text is seen in the fact that it is dealing with *"condemnation"* – a word that should strike fear into the heart of everyone who is casual about life. It will highlight the fact that life is not to be considered from the viewpoint of the past, or speculation about the future. Life is to be assessed by how it is being lived at this time.

HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT. Other versions read, *"he who does not believe,"* ^{NKJV} *"those who do not believe,"* ^{NRSV} *"he who has no faith in Him,"* ^{BBE} *"whoever doesn't believe in Him,"* ^{CEB} *"do not trust,"* ^{CJB} *"but he that believes not,"* ^{DARBY} *"he who is not believing,"* ^{YLT} *"don't trust Him,"* ^{LIVING} *"does not commit himself to Jesus,"* ^{IE} *"does not trust,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"The one not trusting,"* ^{ABP} *"does not believe (cleave to, rely on, trust in Him)."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Note that the text is not an assessment of the past:– i.e. *"Has not believed,"* *"did not believe,"* etc. This is rather an appraisal of the present:–i.e. *"Is not believing,"* *"is not trusting,"* etc. It is true that there was a time when we *"first trusted in Christ,"* a time when we *"trusted, after that [we] heard the truth of the Gospel"* (Eph 1:12-13). However, this is not the believing to which Jesus refers. This is the believing to which Hebrews 10:39 refers: *"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."* Other versions read *"to the preserving of the soul,"* ^{NASB} and *"by faith preserve the soul."* ^{AMPLIFIED} Believing keeps a person from losing his own soul in order to supposedly profit by gaining something from this world (Matt 16:26).

Those who are justified live by faith. As it is written, *"the just shall live by his faith"* (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). Life, as God counts life, cannot be maintained independently of faith, or believing. As soon as faith is not found, or believing is not being done, there really is no spiritual life – no ability to respond to God. If it is countered that the Lord keeps us, this is emphatically true. However, we are *"kept by the power of God THROUGH FAITH unto salvation ready to be revealed"* (1 Pet 1:5). I do not believe enough

is being said these days about continuing to believe on Christ. This is involved in *"fighting the good fight of faith"* (1 Tim 6:12), *"earnestly contending for the faith"* (Jude 1:3), and keeping the faith (2 Tim 4:7). **A valid faith, or believing, is always in the present tense.** And what of the person who is not presently believing – who is not presently trusting in Christ? Jesus answers the question – and it is an arresting answer, indeed.

IS CONDEMNED ALREADY. Other versions read, *"has been judged already,"* ^{NASB} *"stand condemned already,"* ^{NIV} *"hath been judged already,"* ^{ASV} *"has been judged even now,"* ^{BBE} *"has been condemned already,"* ^{NET} *"have already been tried and condemned,"* ^{LIVING} *"has already received sentence,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} *"has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"he has already been convicted and has already received his sentence]" . . . [He is condemned for refusing to let his trust rest in Christ's name.]* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word translated *"already"* [ay'-day], means *"NOW, ALREADY,"* ^{THAYER} *"OF TIME BY THIS TIME, NOW,"* ^{FRIBERG} *"PRESENTLY,"* ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} *"NOW . . . REALLY."* ^{GINGRICH} Those who can properly be classified as *"unbelievers"* (Lk 12:46; 1 Cor 6:6; 1 Cor 14:23; 2 Cor 6:14) are either those who have never *"obeyed the Gospel"* (2 Thess 1:8), or have *"departed from the faith"* (1 Tim 4:1), drawing *"back to perdition"* (Heb 10:38). From the contemporary, or present, point of view, they are those who are not living by faith (Gal 3:11), do not walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7), or are standing by faith (2 Cor 1:24).

BECAUSE HE HATH NOT BELIEVED. Other versions read, *"because he has no faith,"* ^{BBE} *"because they don't believe,"* ^{CEB} *"have not trusted,"* ^{CJB} *"because he believeth not"* ^{DOUAY} *"because that person does not believe,"* ^{NJB} *"who does not believe,"* ^{NLT} *"he believeth not."* ^{TNT} and *"He is condemned for refusing to let his trust rest in Christ's name."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

At this point we must approach our test with godly sobriety. **We must not think that being saved and being condemned are conditions in which we continually waffle back and forth.** Those who are *"weak in the faith"* (Rom 14:1), or not yet *"established in the faith"* (Col 2:7), and are *"children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine,"* are not those who believe not, or are not believing. Such are in a state of growth, but are not in the grip of unbelief.

Those who *"have not believed"* are those who have settled in unbelief, and are consistently living their lives without regard for, or trust in, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because they are accommodated to not believing, and are refusing to live by faith, they are put on equal footing with those who never did believe. *"Unbelievers"* is a class of people (Lk 12:46; 1 Cor 6:6; 14:23; 2 Cor 6:14). They are dominated by unbelief, and by a lack of persuasion that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Anyone who is so characterized is condemned because they are in that state. These words of Jesus are not intended to be used in the diagnosis of other people. They are rather to inform us as individuals of the way God regards men, and are intensely personal.

THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION

"¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Now Jesus focuses on the condemnation of reference, showing it to be just and righteous. Unbelief is not an accident. Jesus will confirm that it is a choice based upon man's preference for darkness. This also has strict regard to how a person regards Jesus Christ, who is the exclusive Savior of men.

THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION. Other versions read, *"This is the judgment,"* ^{NASB} *"This is the verdict,"* ^{NIV} *"this is the test by which men are judged,"* ^{BEB} *"the basis for judgment,"* ^{CEB} *"why people are condemned,"* ^{GWN} *"the [ground of] condemnation,"* ^{MRD} *"Their sentence is based on this fact,"* ^{LIVING} *"This is the crisis we're in,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"The [basis of the] judgment (indictment, the test by which men are judged, the ground for the sentence)."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the foundational view of *"eternal judgment"* (Heb 6:2). So far as the lives of men are concerned, everything hinges on whether or not they believe on Jesus. The Savior will now state the Divine initiative in the whole matter. Even though man was created, and placed in both time and place in order that he might seek the Lord (Acts 17:26-27), the matter was not left solely in man's hands. The salvation of men postulates a Divine initiative – one that was purposed before the foundation of the world, and would depend upon the accomplishments of *"the Second Man"* – who was not from the lineage of Adam. Jesus will now tell us why men will be finally, formally, and irreversibly be condemned.

LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD. Other versions read, *"light has come,"* ^{NKJV} *"came into the world,"* ^{CEB} *"God's light came into the world,"* ^{NLT} *"the Light from heaven came into the world,"* ^{LIVING} and *"God-light streamed into the world."* ^{MESSAGE}

The different versions present this Light in the **past** tense: *"came into the world."* ^{CEB/NLT/LIVING} They also present it in the **present** tense: *"is come,"* ^{KJV} and the sense of still being in the world: *"has come."* ^{MKJV} All three views are correct. When the Word of made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), Light had come into the world – light that made man's status known, and light that made God known. Commensurate with the ministry of Jesus the thoughts of the hearts of men were revealed (Lk 2:35). This was moral and spiritual light that not only made man's unrighteous status known, by also made known what God purposed to do about it. The prodigious and powerful ministry of Jesus also revealed that what God had purpose to do, He was fully able to do. **We have had enough of men defining the state of humanity.** By nature men deal with secondary matters, not primary ones: flawed conduct, the breakdown of the family, the waywardness of youth, the weakness of human government, the enslavement of men to certain types of conduct, etc. At that level, the ills of humanity cannot be cured. Jesus shed light on the subject. The difficulty is that men are alienated from God (Eph 4:18; Col 1:21), dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1,5; Col 2:13), and vassals of the devil (Eph 2:2). By nature men are *"foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another"* (Titus 3:3). Jesus confirmed those conditions by His life, His words, and the totality of His ministry.

MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT. Once Jesus entered the world, and commenced going about doing good and healing who were oppressed of the devil (Acts 10:38), people had to choose between Him and the course of the world. Ultimately, He was, as Isaiah prophesied, unanimously *"rejected of men"* (Isa 53:3). At the most crucial hour, even *"all the disciples forsook Him"* (Matt 26:56). The reason they were recovered is that Jesus had chosen them (John 6:70), and the Father had kept them (John 17:11,15). In that choice and keeping, Divinity was made known.

Men as a whole *"loved darkness rather than light."* They delighted in not being able to perceive the things of God, know God, and walk with Jesus. His very presence, as Simeon prophesied, was *"set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against"* (Luke 2:34). Men would have had no objection to Jesus if He did not shine the light on their wicked ways. However, that is what He does, and He

will not consent to cease from this ministry.

BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL. Other versions read, *"their works were evil,"* ^{ASV} *"their acts are evil,"* ^{BBE} *"their actions are evil,"* ^{CEB} *"were wicked,"* ^{CJB} and *"they were doing . . . evil."* ^{IE} Their works, deeds, and actions were *"evil,"* or *"wicked,"* because they were done with a total disregard for God. God had made them, and done so for Himself. Yet, they preferred their will to God's will. Therefore, everything they did was not only wrong, it was *"evil,"* or *"wicked."*

They preferred the indulgence of their wills, to participating in the will of God. They enjoyed being sinners, and therefore rejected Christ. This is still why men reject Jesus. **It is not because they do not understand.** Rather, it is because they **DO** understand that to follow Jesus they will have to cease their manner of life, which they love. It is the moral and spiritual requirements of God that move men to reject Christ. That situation can only be corrected by a new birth. Men must be born again!