

## JOHN THREE: SIXTEEN

By

R. L. Moyer, D. D.

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### CHAPTER EIGHT -

#### In Him

"IT MAKES NO difference what man believes so long as he is sincere in it." This is a statement frequently heard. It is a statement absolutely without foundation. It is more - it is a Satanic lie. The more sincerely a man believes error, the more dangerous it is to him. We can prove this by the old illustration of the woman who got up in the night time to take a dose of cough medicine. In the dark she took a bottle, sincerely believing that it was a bottle of cough syrup, but her sincerity did not save her from death by poisoning. No matter how sincere a person may be, that sincerity does not change poison into cough syrup.

The papers recently carried an item concerning the collapse of a bridge which carried six people to their deaths. They believed in all sincerity in the safety of the bridge, but that did not prevent the bridge from collapse.

The "sincerity" argument is a weak one. The value of faith is found only in the object on which it rests. The only faith that saves is faith that rests **"in Him."** **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12). **"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"** (I John 5:11-12).

Faith is the same in nature whether it reposes on true or false testimony.

The priests of Baal believed that their GOD could bring fire down to the altar just as firmly as Elijah believed that JEHOVAH could do it. The difference between the two was that Elijah's faith rested on true testimony while that of the followers of Baal rested on a delusive testimony.

Satan will try to make us believe that there is salvation apart from JESUS CHRIST, but we know there is none. J. T. Mawson writes the following: "The devil's work is clearly manifested in the fact that in these last days there are those who call themselves Christians, who put Confucius, and Mahomet, and Buddha, and other historical figures on the same platform as the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

"Our ship put in to Colombo for a day for coal and supplies, and we all were glad to go ashore after three weeks of ship board life. When we returned at night everybody was full of the day's adventures. One lady told me that she had been to a Buddhist temple, on the walls of which were

paintings depicting scenes in the life of Buddha, - they had all been explained by the priest in charge, 'and,' said the lady, 'they were so much like what we read about CHRIST, that I have come to the conclusion that there was no difference between Buddha and CHRIST, and if these people believe in Buddha that is all that is required.'

"And what about your believing in Buddha, too, if there is no difference between him and CHRIST?" I asked.

"Well, of course, I belong to the West, and so I believe in CHRIST, but I do not see any difference between them,' she replied.

"In those pictures depicting incidents in the life of Buddha,' I asked, 'Did you see one of Buddha dying on a cross for sinners?'

"No,' she said; 'there wasn't one like that.'

"Then, of course, there would not be one of Buddha, having died, rising again from the dead.'

"No,' she said, 'There was not.'

"Then,' I said, 'Buddha cannot be like CHRIST, for the two great facts about CHRIST are that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.'

"I was glad that the lady finally agreed that Buddha was not like CHRIST.

"I proclaim the unique glory of the only begotten SON of GOD. In Time and Eternity He has no rival. **There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,** for He only could die for sinners, and rise again from the dead. Oh that men would understand this and turn to Him wholly!"

### **Why Is It So Essential to Believe in Him? Because "In Him" Alone Is Perfection**

He is perfect in person. The history of man is a history of sin, but He is a distinct break in history. "He is an interjected perfection. He is a heavenly invasion." He is the LAMB without spot and without blemish. If this were not true there would be no salvation for us, for certainly a sinful person cannot die as the substitute for another sinful person. His sin would demand his own death.

"No mortal can with Him compare  
Among the sons of men."

*He is perfect in offering.* Because of this perfection He was offered "**once for all.**" He stands in distinct contrast to the many animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. The fact of their insufficiency is impressed by the fact of their repetition. Old Testament salvation might really be

spoken of as a periodic affair. The priest might bring an offering for the atonement of the sins of the people this year, but he had to bring another offering the next year. That is why it is said that the Old Testament sacrifices never made the comers thereto perfect.

*His offering was once for all sin. All of our sins, past, present, and future - were laid on Him.*

Some saints seem to be puzzled over this. They seemingly have no difficulty with the sins committed up to the day they accepted CHRIST as a personal SAVIOUR, but they are very doubtful concerning sins committed from that day on. They forget that all their sins were future when CHRIST died. Not a single one had yet been committed. In His death He bore them all.

*His offering was once for all time.* Every man who today believes in the Lord JESUS CHRIST is saved, but the offering of Calvary also saves Adam, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Isaiah. Undoubtedly men will be saved after the rapture of the Church in the tribulation period, but men in the future will be saved exactly as men today or men in the past - because they "**have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**" (Revelation 7:14). Yesterday, today, and forever - no other sacrifice is needed.

*His offering was once for all classes.* He died for the rich and the poor, the colored and the white, the illiterate and the cultured, the moral and the immoral. He did not have to die an emergency death to save the chief of sinners.

### **"In Him" Alone Is Reconciliation**

**"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:19-20).**

The word "reconciliation" means "to cause," or "effect a thorough change," or "to change thoroughly." Lenski gives it, "to make thoroughly other." We believe the word always carries with it the thought of change. Reconciliation is a great word, a glad word, but a sad word, too. It indicates a break, a separation. How sad that reconciliation should be necessary!

Sin is the thing that has caused separation. It is the most dismal word in human language. Men think lightly of sin, and seem to think today that GOD considers it lightly, but He does not. Sin is the eternal outlaw in the universe of GOD. Since there has been a separation between GOD and man because of sin, the question of sin must be settled before there can be any change from estrangement and alienation to fellowship and nearness.

Calvary is the place of reconciliation. Those who believe that CHRIST's ministry on earth was an attempt to reconcile men to the FATHER are wide of the mark. Reconciliation was accomplished by His death. "**When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son**" (Romans 5:10).

Since the word "reconciliation" means to change thoroughly, the question comes up: What or who was changed?

Some have insisted that by the Cross GOD was changed, as in the old hymn, "*My GOD is reconciled.*" Others have insisted that man was changed. We think, however, that there is a great deal of truth in Sir Robert Anderson's statement: "And let us not fritter away the truth by supposing this reconciliation to mean a change in the sinner's heart to GOD. That is not reconciliation, but the present work of the HOLY SPIRIT."

We think we are nearest the Scriptural meaning when we consider two thoughts in reconciliation: Objective reconciliation, which has to do with the status of a man; and subjective reconciliation, which has to do with the experience of a man.

"**When we were enemies**" is sometimes perverted to make it mean people to whom GOD was the enemy. This is not true. We were the enemies of GOD. "**The carnal mind is enmity against God**" (Romans 8:7). Reconciliation does not mean that GOD gave up His enmity toward us. It does mean that through CHRIST's death GOD changed our status. By our sin, our ungodliness, we were in the dreadful state where we deserved nothing from GOD but damnation, and unless GOD did something to change this status, He would be compelled to condemn us. It was by means of the death of CHRIST that we have been given an utterly different standing.

Reconciliation does not change GOD. It does not make Him give up His enmity. He had none. He always loved the world. Indeed, it was this love that led Him to give His SON.

Reconciliation did not change man. The mind of man was against GOD before Calvary, and it is still against GOD. There has been no change.

If the Cross changed neither GOD nor man, what did it change? II Corinthians 5:19 gives the answer. This verse does not say that GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world; that is, changing the world. It does not say that GOD was in CHRIST reconciling Himself; that is, changing Himself. It does say that GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world unto Himself. GOD was not changed, man was not changed, but the relationship between the two was changed. This change, as we have said, is one of status, position, standing - not of character. That comes afterward by the grace and power of GOD. This alone explains the statement of II Corinthians 5:19, "**not imputing their trespasses unto them.**"

The separation between GOD and man has been removed through the sacrifice of CHRIST on Calvary, so that now there is nothing that stands between GOD and the sinner except the personal will of that sinner. Today it is not sin but unbelief that keeps a man from salvation. When preachers, in CHRIST's stead, plead with men to be reconciled to GOD, they are pleading with men to turn from their unbelief to faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

We repeat Romans 5:10: "**When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God.**" The instant CHRIST died, the status of the whole world of sinners was changed completely. It was now a world for whose sins expiation was made. It was no longer a world with sins unatoned. All sin was laid upon the SON of GOD. GOD knows this, whether men believe it or not, and men are now held responsible for receiving or rejecting the SAVIOUR Who died for their sins. Reconciliation is for all; salvation only for those who believe.

We have read an illustration that helps to make reconciliation plain.

A certain judge has a son whom he loves, although that son is characterless and a spendthrift. He rebels against his father's authority, steals a large sum of money temporarily in his father's charge, and flees the country. By this act that son establishes a new relationship between himself and his father. the father still loves the son, but he must regard him as a law-breaker. Furthermore, the father is obliged to put a price upon the head of his son, and if that son ever returns within the jurisdiction of his father's court, the father must try him and pass sentence upon him as upon any other criminal.

While that son is a fugitive from justice, the father's heart goes out in compassion to him and he offers to sacrifice all of his property to repay the amount stolen by his son. The other party agrees to this and the money is paid. Now, by that transaction, the father, who is the representative of the law, has reconciled his son unto himself. By the payment of the money the judge was not himself changed.

He loved his son no more deeply than before. Indeed, it was the love for the son that led him to the sacrifice of all his property; but neither did the payment of the money change the son. He hadn't even heard of it. The point is that by settling the claim, the relationship between the judge and the son was changed. He can now receive his son back. He can receive him into his own home instead of sending him into prison. The son may not come back; nevertheless, there is nothing that stands in the way of his return save his own will.

It was something like this that GOD did in the Cross. The world had rebelled against GOD. It had broken His laws and might be looked upon as a fugitive from justice. GOD, as a righteous JUDGE, was compelled to put a price upon the head of the world. There was no other way or choice in the matter, but the heart of GOD went out in love to this world. He became incarnate in JESUS CHRIST, went to the Cross, and there paid the debt.

By the payment of the debt, GOD was not changed; neither did the transaction change the world, for most of the world continues in rebellion against GOD even to this very day; but the relationship between GOD and the world is changed. By the Cross, GOD took away the necessity that required that the world be treated as a criminal and made it possible for Him to invite men to return to Him without the least fear of judgment.

This does not mean universal restoration. Reconciliation does not insure eternal life. The word "**believeth**" still stands. Reconciliation is for all, but by faith ye are saved.

We must note that in the subjective aspect of reconciliation there comes a change in the saved one from enmity into faith. This has to do with us as new creatures in CHRIST. The new creation has transformed us from enemies to friends.

### **"In Him" Alone Is Propitiation**

**"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2).**

Propitiation is another of the great words of Scripture. It is a Latin word meaning "to appease" or

"a means of satisfying." We must not, however, introduce the pagan thought of an angry, vindictive god whose wrath can be appeased only by the shedding of blood.

The Scriptural thought is that on the basis of the sacrifice of CHRIST, GOD justifies Himself for dealing in kindness with men who deserve harshness. Propitiation really has to do with the vindication of GOD's law. GOD could not save us at the expense of His holy law. Indeed, He must save His law before He could save us.

The law had gone forth with its penalty - Death to every soul that sinneth. Since all have sinned, all have come under the righteous condemnation of the law. JESUS CHRIST came to die in the sinner's stead. The law was vindicated when sin was laid upon Him and punished. Thus the sinner was provided a way of escape from sin and its awful consequences. Love took the sinner's place and suffered the punishment for his sins.

The word "**propitiation**" is in Hebrews 9:5 translated "**mercy seat.**" The mercy seat was the lid, or cover, of the ark of the covenant. The ark was a receptacle for the law of GOD, which law pronounced death upon all who offended, even in one point. Once every year at the brazen altar the sacrificial substitute was slain; its blood was caught in a basin and carried by the priest into the Holy of Holies, where it was sprinkled upon the golden cover of the ark of the covenant.

The very moment the crimson touched the gold, a mercy seat was provided. The law in the ark cried out "Death"; the blood on the cover testified, "Death has taken place."

It declared that the penalty for sin had been meted out. That mercy seat was GOD's throne in Israel. GOD's throne is established in righteousness and must always be maintained in righteousness. Were there no propitiation, GOD and sinful man could meet only in judgment. Such a meeting of judgment will take place between GOD and fallen angels, for there is no propitiation for fallen angels.

The only way in which this throne of GOD could become a throne of mercy instead of a throne of judgment was through the sacrifice for sin. It was the sin of Adam that turned the throne of GOD into a throne of judgment. It is the cross of CHRIST which has changed that throne into a throne of grace.

When the lid of the ark was removed, GOD was no longer mercy-seated. On one occasion at Bethshemesh (I Samuel 6) when the lid of the ark was removed and the people looked into the ark, they were mowed down by a horrible scourge of death. Death is always the result when man comes face to face with the law of GOD. Someone has said, "When GOD looked at Calvary, the throne of naked and appalling justice became the throne of glorious and thrilling grace."

*GOD is mercy-seated and CHRIST is the Mercy Seat. GOD is satisfied, and CHRIST is the Satisfaction. GOD is propitiated, and CHRIST is the Propitiation.*

To the child of GOD there is something very beautiful in Scriptural propitiation. Among men it is always the man who has given offense who brings the propitiation, but between GOD and man it is not man, the offender, but GOD, the offended, Who brings the propitiation. No gift that man could give could ever propitiate GOD. Man has nothing that would avail. What would you give?

**"Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"** (Micah 6:7). No, not even the gift of a son by a parent would be sufficient for propitiation. Man's son is not sufficient; GOD's Son is.

*Note here the difference between paganism and salvation.* In times of declension Israel would offer her own sons to the god Molech. Needless to say, such a sacrifice was useless.

### **"In Him" Alone Is Acceptance**

**"Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved"** (Ephesians 1:6).

The "**wherein**" refers to grace. It is grace that has made us accepted in the BELOVED. The word "**accepted**" is literally "engraced." This suggests that the sinner is never accepted apart from the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

"**Hath**" is a present blessing as well as eternal. "**Hath**" - not may or might, not shall or will, not could or would, but "**hath**."

The "**us**" refers to all the unworthy recipients of His grace. Surely we never deserved to be accepted of GOD. GOD said to Cain, "**If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?**" (Genesis 4:7). But Cain did not do well. Neither have we, for we are sinners, all. Where Cain was rejected, Abel was accepted. Faith was the basis of that acceptance. He was accepted because he came as a sinner who knew that he deserved death. He confessed that when he slew the lamb. When GOD accepted Abel's sacrifice He accepted Abel. Indeed, Abel was accepted in that sacrifice. GOD will accept you in the sacrifice of Calvary just as He accepted Abel. Today we exhort lost men to "accept CHRIST," whereas they ought to be exhorted to believe that GOD has accepted CHRIST Whom He has provided for the sacrifice for the sinner.

**"Accepted in the Beloved!"** What a wondrous fact!

What a wondrous position! The saved one does not stand before GOD in any righteousness of his own, but through the grace of GOD he has been accepted in CHRIST and is looked upon and loved even as CHRIST Himself. The Father's estimate of the saved sinner is the estimate of His own beloved Son.

Really, accepted means more than received. It means honored, graced, made beautiful with the beauty of CHRIST. This phrase has been translated "He has enlarged us or beautified us." His comeliness is put upon us. Grace takes away our righteous rags and clothes us in royal robes. Out of the Father's house come the robe, the ring, the shoes.

We close as we began. It is only the sinner who believes IN HIM who is saved, for

### **"In Him" Alone Is Salvation**

It is CHRIST alone Who saves. Nothing can take His place. Religion never yet saved any man. Formalities and superficialities cannot take the place of CHRIST. As Barbour says, "Countless and constant efforts are made after 'better environment,' 'social uplift' and 'reform.' It is forgotten that men may be surrounded with the atmosphere of Heaven and their hearts left to languish in the unregenerate state of sin. When we have 'Him' He makes a new creation of a man. He changes from the center to the circumference. He is the One we all need, for He alone meets all the needs of all."

May we be technical for a moment? That little word "in" in this verse is not the Greek preposition "en" answering to our English "in," but it is "eis" or "into." If this means anything, it means that a man may believe in CHRIST without being saved - that is, without trusting wholly to Him. It is not enough to believe in CHRIST in the sense of believing that He actually existed, that He lived in the land of Palestine, that He was crucified by the Romans. "Into" expresses the thought of entering into, being linked to, made one with CHRIST. This means that we must believe the testimony of the Word about the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and appropriate Him as our own personal SAVIOUR Who did all the work of redemption for us, and trust only in Him to be saved. Only so can any individual be so united to CHRIST as to be spoken of in Scripture as **"in Christ."**

We visited Paul Hutchins, the author, who spent some weeks in the Asbury Hospital in Minneapolis. He told us that for a number of years he had heard of a physician who he believed could heal him, and yet it was several years before he finally put himself under the care of that physician. This may be a crude illustration, but Hutchins believed in the physician before he believed into him; that is, entrusted himself entirely to him.

Mr. A. W. Hakes tells a very interesting story of a picture that hung upon the wall of a hospital ward. The background was a rough stone wall, above it a leaden sky. In the foreground a pale, sad-eyed, weary-looking girl had fallen on a stone bench, and in her arms she held a sick boy, with a white band tied around his forehead above the sunken, faded eyes. In front of them CHRIST stood, the patient, long-suffering, ever-loving CHRIST, and His hands, not yet pierced, rested upon the head of the sick boy, and His eyes full of unspeakable tenderness caught the upturned eyes of the boy, and in the eyes of the poor sick little fellow the light was beginning to come back.

On the bed directly opposite the picture, tossing in fever, wild with delirium, was a homeless boy from the slums. Born of rum-cursed parents, nursed at a rum-scented breast, and tossed in the nervous arms of a drunken mother, the boy had been born to a heritage of woe. He knew nothing of what the word "father" meant. When the fever came, he had been found by a policeman on the damp floor of his cellar.

They brought him to the hospital and hands soft and delicate ministered to him, while the white-souled nurse trembled in terror at his awful curses. Finally he grew better, and the doctor said he would recover.

One morning the nurse said, "Shall I read to you?"

"No," said the boy, and his eyes sought the picture. "Tell me about that picture. Who is He?"



"He is CHRIST," she said, and then, with a prayer in her heart, she told the boy about Him. When she closed she said, "Do you believe in Him?"

"I believe in you," he said.

The next morning he said, "Tell me more about Him."

The nurse was very glad to tell about CHRIST. Her life had been one of trial but now she was anchored in the haven of rest, and the SAVIOUR had brought a calm to the troubled waters of her life. As she told the old, old story, the boy said, "You know Him, don't you?"

"Yes," she said, "thank GOD, I do."

"And does He love boys?"

"He loves everybody."

"Rough boys like me?"

"Everybody."

And so it went on, day after day. She talked of Him, and at last there came a day when she said again, "Do you believe in Him?"

And the boy said, "I believe." Two faces, bathed in tears of rapturous joy, were lifted to the picture.

The boy came into the hospital with a moral disease that was more terrible than the fever that wasted his body, and went away, not only renewed in body, but in soul. Next to his heart he carried a small Bible. In his heart he carried CHRIST.

That is what CHRIST can do - for you.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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