

## WHY GOD SENT JESUS

John 3:13-17 Text vs. 14 *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”*

Salvation is when by faith you accept the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. Salvation is the assurance of being delivered from the eternal punishment of sin. Jesus alone provides salvation by the grace of God. By looking up to Jesus on the cross and believing, you receive forgiveness of your sin. This act of faith is not just a one-time event. It's trusting in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. John 3:16, the verse following our text today, beautifully puts the reason behind Jesus' sacrifice in a nutshell. Say it with me: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* God's love is what's behind your salvation. It's an unconditional absolute love that is eternal.

At the beginning of John's Gospel in chapter 3 from which our lesson comes today, Jesus had a late-night conversation with a Jewish religious party leaser named Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee. And Pharisees insisted on connecting the oral unwritten traditions of the Jews to the written Law of Moses. In their conversation, Jesus referred to a symbol in the Old Testament that points to the coming salvation of Jesus. The judgement of God is coming, and the only remedy for sin and to escape God's wrath is to believe and look up at Jesus crucified. The story of the serpent on a pole is found in the Book of Numbers, (Numbers 21:4-9) and tells about the Israelites wandering in the desert during their Exile from Egypt. They began to complain against God and Moses for they were hungry and missing the good food they had in Egypt. They said it would have been better to die in Egypt where they had plenty to eat rather than starve in the desert. They were tired of eating manna! They longed for meat, recalling the variety of foods they had in Egypt. And after hearing the report from the spies sent to explore Canaan, the Promised Land, they were afraid and doubted God's plan. They were wishing they had died in Egypt instead of facing potential defeat in Canaan. Their complaints showed their struggles and lack of faith during their time in the desert, so as a result, God sent venomous snakes among them. Many were bitten and died. The people then repented and asked Moses to pray for them.

That's when God instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole. Anyone who was bitten could look up at the bronze serpent and live. It's a clear parallel to Christ's redeeming death on the cross. Interestingly, this has been linked to the modern medical symbol of a snake on a staff. About 550 BC, the Jews had preserved not only Moses' five books of the Law, the Torah, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy and prophets' writings, but they had preserved the serpent of brass on a pole which Moses long ago had made as a mark of healing for the Jews. The brass serpent was kept for many years until King Hezekiah destroyed it because the Jews had begun to worship it, burning incense to it, which was against God's commandments. It has always been a symbol of medical healing and saving lives. It is called *caduceus*. And in 1902, the caduceus became part of the US Army medical officer uniforms, and the symbol is used throughout the medical field in the United States today. The next time you are in the doctor's office, and he is wearing a white coat, look at the symbol that's on his coat pocket.

So, the judgement of God is coming, and the only remedy for that is to believe and look up at Jesus crucified to escape God's wrath. Although it's difficult to talk about the wrath of God, you can't soften the truth of the Bible. God is holy. And who can judge His actions? People only have a limited understanding of God. But through His great love, God offered a way back to Him through His Son by providing everlasting life to those who believe in His Son. In times of trouble, or doubt, or sin, you must look to Jesus. He's your only hope of healing and salvation. Just as the Israelites looked up to the bronze serpent and lived, you too, are called to look up to Jesus and live. The message of the cross is one of hope and salvation. And as a believer, you are called to share this Good News with others. Jesus came not just teach or do miracles. He came to save you! Salvation is the primary purpose for His coming. And we are under the wrath of God because of our sin, just like the Israelites with the serpents. Now, the world rejects the idea of the wrath of God. But it's clearly taught in Scripture. You can't save yourself or soothe God's wrath through your own efforts. You are helpless. That's why Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again.

The “wrath of God” is a significant theme in the Bible. It refers to God's righteous anger and judgment against sin and evil. The wrath of God in the Old Testament is often shown as a response to the disobedience and idolatry of the Israelites when they worshipped the golden calf. (Exodus 32:10) In the New Testament, the wrath of God mentioned in Romans 1:18 is where it states, *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people.”* But God's wrath is not random. It's not unpredictable. It's a direct response to sin. It reflects God's holiness and God's rejection of evil. God's wrath is trying to bring people to repentance and restore them to a right relationship with Him. Throughout history, God's wrath has been shown in various judgments. The Flood in Noah's time. (Genesis 6-9) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 19) And the Bible speaks of a future end time wrath that will be poured out as described in the book of Revelation. But there is salvation from God's Wrath. And it's through Jesus Christ! The New Testament points that out. Believers are saved from the wrath of God through their faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 5:9 says, *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”*

God's desire is not to punish. His desire is to bring people to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 states, *"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* That's why Jesus compared Himself to the bronze serpent. By looking to Him in faith, you can be saved from eternal death. And Jesus' death on the cross is the only means of doing that. Though it seems foolish and impossible to human thinking, you simply just need to look to Jesus in faith to be saved. You may not fully understand how it works. But if you believe in Jesus, you will not perish. You will be saved to eternal life. That's the good news of the Gospel. That's why God sent Jesus!

However, merging God's wrath with God's love can be challenging. And you need to understand that both His wrath and His love are part of His perfect nature. God's holiness means He is completely pure and separate from sin. And His wrath is His response to sin and evil. God's wrath is an expression of His justice. Just as a good judge must punish wrongdoing, God's wrath guarantees justice is served, which means that a fair and proper outcome has been achieved. For example, if someone commits a crime and is found guilty by a court and receives a sentence that fits the crime, people say "justice is served." That means the legal system worked correctly and fairly. So, God is both Judge and Jury. Love and Mercy. He wants a relationship with you. And He wants to save you from the penalty of your sin. God's mercy is evident in His patience and willingness to forgive you by providing you a way to be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.

And The Cross is the intersection where you meet God! It's where God's wrath and love meet. Jesus took upon Himself the wrath we deserve by demonstrating God's justice. And at the same time, His sacrifice shows the depth of God's love for us. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are offered forgiveness and eternal life which satisfies God's justice and His mercy. His wrath is for our own good and His glory and draws us closer to Him. *"God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!"* (Romans 5:8-9) *"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9)

If you understand God's wrath and love, it will help you understand His holiness, His justice, and His mercy. By looking to Jesus, you can see the perfect balance of God's wrath and love. And it leads you to a deeper relationship with Him. His holiness, justice, and love remind you of the seriousness of sin and the incredible gift of salvation offered through Jesus Christ. So, respond to God's call to repentance. Live in a way that honors Him. Be bold in your witness. Point others to the One who was lifted up for their salvation. And remember, John 3:14 reminds us of the incredible love and grace of God. Jesus was lifted up on the cross so that we might have eternal life. Continually, look to Him in faith, trusting in His sacrifice, and share His love with the world. Amen.