

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 7-15-12 AM NOTES
"IS GOD TOLERANT?"
JOHN 14:4-6
#54 in Series, "Verse by Verse through John"

Modernism – A worldview that believes only science can explain reality

Postmodernism – The worldview that says absolute, objective, universal truth does not exist

Old Tolerance – A commitment to respect all people even if we totally disagree with their religion or ideas

Ephesians 4:2 (KJV) "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love".

Postmodern Tolerance (New Tolerance) – There are no wrong beliefs or ideas

Pluralism – All religions lead to god

Exclusivism – Salvation only comes through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and His substitutionary death on the cross

John 3:18 (NKJV) "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Acts 4:12 (NKJV) "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Introduction (V4-5)

John 14:4 (ESV) "And you know the way to where I am going."

I. Jesus Christ Is the Way: Reconciliation (V6a)

Acts 19:9a (NKJV) "But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of **the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them..."

Acts 24:22a (NKJV) "But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of **the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings..."

Hebrews 10:19-20 (NKJV) "19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a **new and living way** which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh".

Romans 6:6 (HCSB) "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin".

Romans 5:11 (NKJV) "And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received **the reconciliation**."

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NKJV) "that is, that God was in Christ **reconciling** the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of **reconciliation**."

Colossians 1:21 (NKJV) "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has **reconciled**".

II. Jesus Christ Is the Truth: Illumination (V6b)

John 1:17 (NKJV) “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Proverbs 4:19 (NKJV) “The way of the wicked *is* like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

Ephesians 4:18 (NKJV) “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

III. Jesus Christ Is the Life: Regeneration (V6c)

“The whole Bible bears solemn witness to the fact that the natural man is spiritually lifeless. He walks according to the course of this world; he has no love for the things of God. The fear of God is not upon him, nor has he any concern for His glory. Self is the center and circumference of his existence. He is alive to things of the world but dead to heavenly things. The one who is out of Christ exists, but he has no spiritual life.”

- Arthur Pink

1 John 5:20b (NKJV) “...His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

Colossians 3:4b (NKJV) “...Christ *who is* our life...”

*Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me.
Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.*

- A. B. Simpson

Genesis 2:17 (NKJV) “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

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“IS GOD TOLERANT?”
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Few people would argue that one of the most important doctrines in Scripture is the doctrine of salvation (soteriology). If a person is wrong about this doctrine, in eternity, it doesn't matter much how many other doctrines he is right about. The Protestant Reformation came about because the church had distorted the doctrine of salvation. Today, we are in desperate need for a re-reformation in the doctrine of salvation. In order to understand how far many of the mainline churches have fallen from the biblical doctrine of salvation, we need to understand five very big words. It's OK to use big words if you define them. The big words I am going to use are modernism, postmodernism, tolerance, pluralism, and exclusivism. Don't turn me off, because understanding these words will enable us to see why the doctrine of salvation has fallen on some really bad times. After seeing the problem, we will turn to the Scripture and look at one of the most controversial verses in the Gospel of John – John 14:6.

The first word that I want us to consider is “Modernism”. **Modernism is a worldview that only science can explain reality.** The modernist starts with the presupposition that nothing supernatural is real. Modernism's heyday was in the early part of the 20th Century through the 1960's. The modernists in the church were known for rejecting the miracles in the Bible, the acceptance of evolution, and turning Christianity into nothing more than moralistic lessons and “social ministry”. There are still some modernists around, but they are on the decline. The second word we need to understand is “Postmodernism”. **Postmodernism is the worldview that absolute, objective, universal truth does not exist.** Postmodernism is the opposite of modernism. Modernism said that truth is that which science can prove or demonstrate. Postmodernism says there is no objective absolute truth. To the postmodernist, truth is whatever each individual deems it to be. The modernists were wrong, but at least they believed that universal absolute truth existed; they were just seeking it the wrong way and in the wrong places. The postmodernist says that universal, objective absolute truth doesn't even exist. To the postmodernist, all truth is subjective – it is what you feel it to be for you. The quest of the postmodernist is not to discover truth; the quest is to understand other's views of their truth. Postmodernism is the prevalent worldview in the United States today. That brings us to the third word – “Tolerance”. Tolerance is not a new word, but postmodernists have given tolerance a new definition. Old tolerance was virtually synonymous with respect. **Old tolerance is a commitment to respect all people even if we totally disagree with their religion or ideas.** The old tolerance says that we can engage in discussion or debate those we disagree with on religious, moral, or with other issues without compromising what we believe as long as we do it with kindness and respect. Though tolerance is never listed in the Bible as a virtue, the old tolerance included the biblical virtues of patience, forbearance, and longsuffering. **Ephesians 4:2 (KJV)** says “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love”. Old tolerance is for people. New tolerance is something altogether different; it is for ideas. **New Tolerance believes that there are no wrong beliefs or ideas.** New tolerance is the natural result of postmodernism. If absolute, objective truth does not exist, then no one has any right to tell anyone else they are wrong even if it is done in a respectful and kind way. The essence of this new tolerance is that no one is wrong. Someone said this about the new tolerance (perhaps it would more accurately be called “postmodern tolerance”): **“This tolerance includes every point of view except those points of view that do not accept every point of view”.** In reality postmodernism says that the only absolute truth is that there are no absolute truths.

Hang with me, and we will get through with these big words in a minute and get to the Scripture. We have looked at the words “modernism”, “postmodernism”, and “tolerance”. The fourth word I want us to look at flows out of postmodernism and deals with the doctrine of salvation. The fourth word is “pluralism”. **Pluralism says that all religions lead to god (whatever an individual's concept of god looks like).** Here is where we see how a postmodern worldview affects the doctrine of salvation.

Pluralism is summarized by the following quote from a postmodernist: “I believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God’s pure love and light, deserving tolerance and understanding” [Quoted in SBC Life, May 2000, Page 2]. This quote is easy to refute because different religion’s views of God, man, sin, and salvation are often opposite one another, and some religions don’t even accept the fact that a god exists. The above statement would be agreed with by the majority of Americans and sadly by a sizable percentage of professing Christians. My purpose here is not to refute these false worldviews and the false beliefs that flow out of them. I have done that in other messages. My goal today is to show you **why** what Jesus said in our text for today infuriates people.

The final word I want to define is “exclusivism”. **Exclusivism, as it applies to Christianity, says that salvation only comes through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and His substitutionary death on the cross.** This is the view taught in Scripture. Jesus says to the pluralist, **John 3:18 (NKJV)** “He who believes in Him [God’s Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” The apostles say to the postmodern, **Acts 4:12 (NKJV)** “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Jesus says to all mankind, whatever their personal views of truth may be, **John 14:6b (NKJV)** “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Be prepared; when you proclaim this exclusivist truth, those with the postmodern worldview (which is the majority of Americans) will unleash some of the most intolerant attacks on you that you could ever imagine! If you want to start a riot, stand in a public place and say “Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven and all the world’s religions are wrong”. Yet, that is exactly what Jesus is saying in our text.

Introduction (V4-5)

Remember that the context is that Jesus has been telling His disciples about the Father’s house. He has told them to not let their heart be troubled because He is going to prepare a place for them in the Father’s house and that He, personally is coming to get them to bring them to be with Him in the Father’s house. Verse 4 is a little clearer in the ESV. **John 14:4 (ESV)** “And you know the way to where I am going.” In other words, “You know the way to the Father’s house.” Thomas was a slow processor (I identify with him). Thomas didn’t get what Jesus said in verses 1-3. “Lord, we don’t even know the destination; how can we know the way to get there?” Jesus answers Thomas in the main verse of our text – verse six. Jesus said, “Thomas, the destination is the Father and you know the way because you know Me and I am the way. In addition, I am the truth and the life.”

Let’s look at this verse that is so despised by postmoderns and yet so necessary to have a correct understanding of the doctrine of salvation. In verse six we see that in Jesus we have three things that are essential to having a pure doctrine of salvation – reconciliation, illumination, and regeneration.

I. Jesus Christ Is the Way: Reconciliation (V6a)

It is interesting that one of the earliest names for followers of Christ was “the Way”. **Acts 19:9a (NKJV)** But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of **the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them...” **Acts 24:22a (NKJV)** “But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of **the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings...” Notice the wording of John 14:6. It does not say that Jesus shows the way; He **is** the way. It does not say that Jesus teaches the way; He **is** the way. It does not say that Jesus guides us in the way; He **is** the way. We see this same truth taught in **Hebrews 10:19-20 (NKJV)** “¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a **new and living way** which He consecrated for us, through the veil, [what is that new and living way] that is, His flesh,” A way assumes two points and the means to get from one point to the other. Jesus is the way in a two-fold sense: First, He is the way from the Father to the alienated sinner. He is God the Son become flesh. Second, He is the way from the alienated sinner to the Father because He (on the cross) removed the barrier – that which has separated God from man – which is sin. We could never build a ladder to climb to God though that is what most human religion tries to do. God came to us in Christ to remove the sin which alienates us and stands between us and our creator. He dealt with the sin

in two ways. First, He dealt with the guilt of sin. We were not only counted guilty along with Adam, we had all continued in acts of sin that revealed our very nature that is sinful. Jesus blood was shed on the cross to cleanse us from every sinful thought, word, and deed. Second, He dealt with the power of sin. This unholy power that moved into man through Adam and enslaved every descendent of Adam was robbed of its authority over us when Jesus took that old sinful nature (the “old man” or “old self”) to the cross with Him and crucified it. **Romans 6:6 (HCSB)** “For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin’s dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin”. Jesus did not just save us from hell; He saved us from sin. Because the guilt of sin has been removed and the power of sin has been broken, we are now reconciled to God and the way to this reconciliation is Christ. **Romans 5:11 (NKJV)** “And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the **reconciliation.**” **2 Corinthians 5:19 (NKJV)** “that is, that God was in Christ **reconciling** the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of **reconciliation.**” **Colossians 1:21 (NKJV)** “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has **reconciled**”. Mankind is alienated from God, at warfare with God, and needs reconciliation to God. Jesus is the exclusive way to that reconciliation.

II. Jesus Christ Is the Truth: Illumination (V6b)

Truth is not found in a system or a philosophy or an experience; it is found in a person. **John 1:17 (NKJV)** “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Christ is the full and final revelation of God who is the source and standard of all truth. Truth is not in a system or philosophy; truth is in a person. Ever since Adam bought the Devil’s lie, mankind has been groping in the darkness of ignorance and error. Even the most intelligent lost person with a genius level IQ gropes in darkness about eternal things such as the attributes of God, the consequences of sin, the condemnation of man, and the true purpose for living, because he does not know the One who is the truth. **Proverbs 4:19 (NKJV)** “The way of the wicked *is* like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.” **Ephesians 4:18 (NKJV)** “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” **2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV)** “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” Jesus illumines the darkness of error and ignorance because He is the truth. Here is the problem that the world has with that: Truth by nature is always narrow and exclusive. The world can accept that narrow and exclusive view of truth in the realm of mathematics or chemistry, but not in the realm of the spiritual and moral. One man put it this way: “The definition of new...tolerance is that every individual’s beliefs, values, lifestyle, and perception of truth claims are equal... There is no hierarchy of truth. Your beliefs and my beliefs are equal, and all truth is relative” [Thomas Helmbock quoted in “Hell? Yes?” by Robert Jeffress, Page 27]. Everybody believes in absolute truth in some realms. The problem is that natural man simply refuses to accept the truth about God, sin, man’s origin, man’s destiny, and his own condemnation. He believes that the square root of 9 absolutely is 3 no matter how sincerely someone thinks it is 4.5. He believes that Nashville is the capital of Tennessee no matter how sincerely someone believes it is Knoxville, but he refuses to accept the truth that Jesus is the only way to the Father and apart from Him all mankind is lost. Why? It is because he dwells in darkness; his understanding is darkened; and his mind is blinded by the god of this world. As the embodiment of the truth, Jesus came to illuminate the darkness and the ignorance that is the result of sin coming into the world, and to turn on the light to reveal that He alone, He exclusively, is the way to be reconciled to the Father. Truth comes not to the seeker, but to the follower of Christ because Jesus Christ is the truth.

III. Jesus Christ Is the Life: Regeneration (V6c)

Christ is the emancipator from spiritual death. Arthur Pink writes: “The whole Bible bears solemn witness to the fact that the natural man is spiritually lifeless. He walks according to the course of this

world; he has no love for the things of God. The fear of God is not upon him, nor has he any concern for His glory. Self is the center and circumference of his existence. He is alive to things of the world but dead to heavenly things. The one who is out of Christ exists, but he has no spiritual life” [“Exposition of the Gospel of John”, page 356]. To people in the state of spiritual death, Jesus cries out, “I am the life”. The word “regeneration” is a Biblical word (Titus 3:5) and it means to be re-birthed, to have life again. This life we receive is Christ’s very life. Christ’s life is called in Scripture “eternal life”. **1 John 5:20b (NKJV)** “...His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” The eternal life we receive when our minds are illuminated with the truth is Christ’s very life. There are two Greek words translated life. The word used here is not physical life, but spiritual life. We were dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1) and Jesus gives us spiritual life. He is that life. **Colossians 3:4b (NKJV)** “...Christ *who is* our life...” When we are born again, Jesus Christ does not simply invigorate the old us in Adam and refine the old man’s unpleasantness and repair some of its defects. He took that old man to the cross and it was crucified with Him (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20). Jesus made us a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and gave us His life – eternal life. He is our life!

CONCLUSION

Before Adam sinned and the curse of sin came upon him and all of his descendents (Genesis 3), Adam and Eve enjoyed a three-fold privilege with God. First, they were in right relationship with God. There was nothing between them and God – no barriers. Second, they knew God and the truth that flowed from Him. Third, they possessed spiritual life. Their spirit (that part of man that allows him to know God) was alive to God and they had intimate communion with God and walked with Him in the Garden of Eden. Then sin came into the world and everything changed. Instead of being rightly related to God, they were alienated and ran from His presence. Instead of knowing the truth, their understanding was darkened and they were now incapable of perceiving truth. Now their spirits were dead to God – there was no spiritual life and thus no intimacy and walking with God. They fully experienced what God said would happen if they sinned. **Genesis 2:17 (NKJV)** “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” As descendents of Adam we were all born alienated from God, blinded to the truth, and spiritually dead. But God who is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He loved us (Ephesians 2:4) sent His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, gave Himself for us. He is the way to reconciliation with the Father for Adam’s descendents who were alienated from God. He is the truth for all whose minds have been blinded by the enemy. He is the life to those who were spiritually dead. When we repent of sin and savingly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ we now know His life in us empowering us in every trial and battle here. We now know the way to the Father’s house – Jesus is the way.

Don’t insult God by compromising with the postmodern world’s view that there are many ways to the Father’s house. That would mean that the Father poured out the wrath our sins deserved on His beloved son when you could have been reconciled to Him any number of other ways. Don’t despise the lost by even implying there are other ways to the Father’s house and thus be partly responsible for giving them a false hope. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and NO ONE comes to the Father except through Him.