

# Avoiding "Christianity Lite"

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[ 0 : 00 ] The Last time we met, we discussed a verse of Scripture that is often used in a salvation presentation, and it should be found in the gospel.

To them, He gave the right to become the children of God to those who believe in His name. And tonight, we're going to examine a passage in some depth, we mentioned it last week, that is also frequently used in an evangelistic or witnessing setting, and probably shouldn't be.

It's found in the book of Revelation, chapter 3, verse 20. Verse 20. Verse 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with me.

Most modern day evangelism places a person's salvation squarely on the shoulders of the individual.

Usually, it is a three-step process that involves making a decision concerning Christ, praying a sinner's prayer, and there's hundreds or thousands of versions of that out there, and receiving Christ into one's heart.

[ 1 : 45 ] For a couple of generations, most evangelists and those who are active witnesses for Christ believe that proper or correct evangelism is impossible without making sure you cover those three essential steps.

So, a question that we are going to resolve is whether or not, I hope we resolve, is whether or not this is true, and the only way to do that is to establish whether or not the method is scriptural.

Is this what the Lord meant when He uttered those words? And the reason this is important is because this verse, along with the passage in John we studied last time, are the two most frequently mentioned verses of Scripture in evangelism.

Now, the problem is not the zeal or the good intentions of the evangelist. The problem is not with the person engaging in a lifestyle of witnessing.

I wish I had not squandered so many witnessing opportunities I've had over the decades, and for which I alone am accountable to God. The problem is that millions of people have bought into what is sometimes called Christianity light, and after following what they are told are the appropriate steps, and then given the assurance that, well, you're in now, they then turn back to worldliness, they have no desire for the things of God or to follow Christ, and really don't even know how to.

[ 3 : 40 ] They don't even know how to. They're not told that in many of these presentations. So what are we to believe about all this? Is true Christianity so weak that it is incapable of fostering change in the convert?

And my response to that is, I don't think so. At conversion, a number of things happen, don't they? The Holy Spirit takes up residence in the new believer.

He comes along with a promise to never leave nor forsake that person. At conversion, a person begins the process of sanctification, being recreated in the image of Christ.

He said, by the way, that is a lifelong pursuit. You will never arrive in this lifetime. Wesley thought you would. And he strove for a state of sinless perfection, but near his death, he admitted, he said, I never got there.

And he said, sometimes the harder I strove, the further away I got. Additionally, God gives us all a promise. He says, I will finish the work that I begin in every born-again and, more accurately, born-from-above believer.

[ 5 : 17 ] I will complete that work. So why are so many people running around, believing themselves to be saved, but living like the world and the devil?

Why was there no change when they followed the three-step process? And I believe there's only one answer.

They were never really converted. They weren't saved. At conversion, a person is described as a new creature in Christ.

Old things pass away. And I think we'd be accurate to say they start passing away. It's not instantaneous. New things come in to fill that void.

And I'm certainly not going to pretend it's instantaneous. It wasn't in my life. At conversion, we become like newborn babies. Dan knows all about that.

[ 6 : 17 ] Some of the others have you do. We're like newborn babies. And we must exist on spiritual milk long before we consume spiritual meat.

But something is new and different. And I think most of us, when we were truly saved, could sense that. If it was real.

I think we have a sense about that. I know my priorities changed. When I got saved. And I got saved late. Like 29. Modern man and even modern churchmen invented a solution to this very perplexing problem of no outward evidence of saving faith.

They had to come up with a solution. Because all these millions of people that were running around back in the world. No interest in church. No interest in the Bible.

And no evidence of saving faith. And they came up with the concept of a carnal Christian. Now, let me define what that means in our day to the people that hold to that.

[ 7 : 39 ] At conversion, and this is not me. This is the guys that hold to that. At conversion, the individual is faced with a fork in the road.

The road splits. And we all know what Yogi Berra said to do when you come to a fork in the road. You've got to take it. We take it.

In this case, the road splits and now we have a decision to make. Some decide to follow the path of spiritual Christianity.

Get involved in a Bible-believing church. Get involved in a Sunday school class. Home Bible studies. Prayer. The whole gamut. Just the whole world changes.

And they participate in the Christian life. In the church. They read their Bible. They meditate on what it says.

[ 8 : 40 ] They pray. They share the gospel and so on. You know, the rapture is supposed to happen today. Are you all aware of that? It's supposed to be today. And the day's not over, at least in this time zone. I don't know what happened to the poor people east of here.

All the way to the international date line. But it was supposed to happen today. I came up with a thought. If I knew for certain that the Lord was coming back at noon tomorrow, what would I do? Witness as much as you can. I'd get up at 6.30, shave, shower, read my Bible, pray, go to work, and say, Lord, I'll see you at noon. I'm going to eat an early lunch.

You know. But some people don't want to do all that. Read, study, unite with the church. They don't want to leave the good life behind.

So they choose the path of what some of these theologians called carnal Christianity. Their life at conversion is indistinguishable from their life before conversion.

[ 9 : 56 ] It's the same life. They bring with them all the sins that brought them great pleasure. What happened? Well, that's the problem.

In my view, nothing happened. Nothing happened. The evidence would seem to indicate they weren't converted. And Jesus said, you'll know them by their fruits.

You'll know them by the evidence that they produce. Converted by its very definition means change from one thing to another.

You're converted. If anyone in here has ever heard of a convertible automobile, it can convert, right? It could be ragtop.

It could be open air. That's the conversion. There's a change. So what are we to make of Jesus standing at the door of our heart and seeking permission to come in?

[ 10 : 56 ] And evangelists have really seized upon this image. And portray Christ in a light that is really neither accurate nor biblical.

Certainly not fitting in the context in which Revelation 3.20 was given. There is even a world famous painting of this scene by an artist named Solomon Warner.

He lived from 1892 to 1968. Brother in Christ. World famous painting inspired him.

There was another painting by William Holman Hunt, another brother in Christ, who did a similar painting, but he did his in 1853. So Solomon Warner went to bat after viewing William Holman

Hunt's painting.

Ironically, I've got them both. This is the older one, 1853 version. You guys can feel free to pass it around if you want to.

[12:06] And then Solomon came along and he said, I'm going to update that and you guys will all, you won't probably recognize that one. You'll all recognize this one.

Very famous. And this is what they painted. And you can look kind of closely at these and you'll realize, whoops, sorry, Kevin. You'll realize some things.

In the portraits, these artists have Christ knocking at the door of the human heart.

They have Jesus asking permission to enter. There's something else about those pictures that escapes most people's attention. There's no doorknob.

There's no latch. Jesus can't grab hold of anything and open the door. And it was not left out accidentally, but is at the heart of the message that the artist wants to convey.

[13:12] So what is the artist trying to say here? In his theology, and I don't want to be too critical, because this was the prevailing theology of his day, and it is in ours, the only way the human heart can be opened is from within.

That's the theology. And that's a widespread belief then and now. Christ is pictured as a gentleman, much too kind, much too gracious, to force his way into the human heart.

God is willing to save, but can only do so to those who are willing to allow him to save them. And that picture, the second one there, hangs in churches throughout the Western world.

It was in my church when I was growing up, and it's often the subject of a salvation message. But it leaves us with the fundamental question, is this interpretation biblical?

biblical? And that's all we're saying here. Does it fit with Scripture? Now, preachers have for generations told the unconverted, and some converted, that Christ is now standing at the door of your heart when you open the door and let Him come in.

[14:41] And they go on to say that only the individual has the power to open the heart door, and until he or she does, the door remains closed, and they remain unconverted.

However, if the unsaved person will pray this particular prayer, the door magically opens, and then and only then can the Savior enter in.

Until then, he can't get in. The person has to pray, he has to be sincere, and then he's assured by the pastor or the witness, okay, now you're saved.

You opened the door, Jesus came in. But this interpretation, as well-meaning as it might be, is fraught with some dangerous error.

First, if you think about it, it presents a Christ Christ, and his father, an essentially impotent person when it comes to individual salvation.

[15:48] He's standing there. His knuckles are starting to hurt. He's been knocking on some guy's door for 40 years, and the guy won't open the door. Can you imagine Jesus returning to the father's side, seated at the right hand of the father, after a long day, hard day, of knocking on doors, and he has to tell the father with tears, sadness, and frustration, nobody opened the door today.

I couldn't get in. And the father gives a deep sigh, and he says, well, son, he said, you can go out again tomorrow. Maybe somebody will get saved before the week's over.

That's not the God of the Bible. It's certainly not the Godhead we worship. It's not the Godhead we depend upon for our salvation. There isn't a door in the universe that Jesus couldn't kick down.

He can kick it off its hinges. I've kicked a few doors off the hinge. We actually have some biblical examples of how Jesus deals with doors.

When he resurrected from the grave, the entrance of the tomb was blocked by a stone that probably weighed a couple of tons or more.

[17:16] That was the form of a door placed in the tomb. Roman seal put on it. Death, if you tampered with that seal. And here we've got this rock.

And by the way, I don't even know if this pen will work. It usually doesn't. The way the Romans and the Jews did that, they had a mound of dirt like this. And it's here.

And they had to roll that stone up here and it got up there and then it fell into place. So the thing was massive and it was in that depression. It would be very impossible to get it out of there.

And women couldn't do it, I promise you. I promise you that. And so, here we have Jesus behind this door several times.

Jesus merely moved it. He commanded the rock to move. And let me say this too.

[ 18 : 13 ] It really doesn't have anything to do with the lesson, but it's important. Jesus didn't remove that stone blocking the tomb in order to get out. He didn't need that to get out.

He removed it to let the world in. To verify He's not here. He's risen. That's why the rock was moved.

And you'll recall that after the resurrection, the Lord appeared to His disciples and I'm often, I've taught on this, you know, why did the women see Jesus first?

Well, because the men were in hiding. I mean, there's no other answer. They were hiding and cringing in fear. He appeared to His disciples.

He didn't knock on the door. He didn't even enter through the door apparently. He just went through the wall. He just came into the room. And He was just suddenly there.

[ 19 : 16 ] Doors, locked or unlocked, have never been a problem for the Creator of the universe. Okay? And there's another problem with the interpretation of Jesus being incapable of entering in.

It does not fit with the speaker in the book of Revelation and with the message of chapter 3. Let me read it again.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with Me. Now, you're going to notice something. This is in the first person.

The speaker is speaking in the first person. The reason for that is this is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you, and I can see from here, have a red letter Bible. Those should be in red letters.

Are they? They should be in red letters. Christ Himself is speaking. So, how do we properly interpret this passage?

[ 20 : 27 ] Well, the same way we interpret any passage. We do it by reading it literally. We read it literally. God's capable of saying what He means and meaning what He says.

And I think the first thing that always strikes me by this portion of Scripture it has absolutely nothing to do with evangelism. Evangelism is not even in view here.

And in a larger sense, there's no passage of Scripture in the Word of God that says the only way you can get saved is by opening up your heart and inviting Jesus to come in.

Guys, if we've got to do that humanly, we're not going to get saved. Because we're not going to do it. The scriptural requirement from the human side, remember we have the divine side, from the human standpoint is you have to repent and believe.

That's how you get saved from the human perspective. And the word for believe is to have faith or trust. Pastuo, same Greek word.

[ 21 : 36 ] But again, Revelation 3:20 is quoted as the way to salvation. An impotent Christ can't do anything until you open the door.

He'll be back tomorrow knocking. And there's no handle so Jesus can't pull on it. The passage in Revelation 3, that area, is about a church.

church. It's talking about a church. And what a church. It tells of one of the seven churches, I know I have a Bible.

One of the seven churches in Asia Minor. And I've been there. That's Turkey, by the way, modern day Turkey. And I was actually at the church at Smyrna. I wish I could have gone to all seven of them. And there used to be tours where you could go.

Now, I'm not so sure of the way Turkey is. I'm not sure I'd recommend it. To the church in Laodicea.

[ 22 : 43 ] And to the angel of the church, that's the messenger, the pastor. And Laodicea write, the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

I know your works. Well, I'll chew on that tonight. I know your works. You're neither cold nor hot. Would that you're either cold or hot. So because you're lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiful, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

I'd hate to stand before the Creator and have Him say that to me. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself in the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Those whom I love I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. There's that word again.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

[ 23 : 59 ] If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I also conquered and sat

down with my Father on his throne.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. And by the way, I fully embrace the fact that those seven churches are also seven periods, and I think we're in Laodicea. We still have Philadelphia hanging on. We're a Philadelphia church, but I believe that we're in the Laodicea period. I also think it's individual believers, but we won't get into that tonight. This church is in modern day Turkey, or was.

The reason Jesus is not inside that church is there's no believer in that church. There are no believers in that church.

If there was one true believer in Christ, Jesus would have been inside that, living inside him and working through him for the benefit of the rest of the church.

[ 25 : 11 ] He would have been inside. This is stark reality that there was no believers in Laodicea, and by extension, if in fact these are periods of time, that means in the last days, the church of Laodicea, there's not going to be any believers in there.

We've got churches across this land. We've got churches in this town that have turned their backs totally on Christ.

Social gospel, what can we do to legalize more extreme abortions? What can we do for homosexuals, lesbians, transvestites?

I mean, that's their mission. No believers in there. Devoid of Christ. It's an amazing, amazing fact. The lesson here is Jesus at the door, but He is not begging for scraps like some poor vagabond.

[ 26 : 15 ] He's the Lord of glory. He knows who are His own. He issues a general call to all people, uses primarily creation and conscience.

I mean, any person who look up at the night sky out where I live and say, well, that was just an accident. I mean, that just, that all came from one Adam.

I don't have that much faith. I'm sorry. The Scriptures tell us that His sheep hear His voice and He knows them and they follow Him.

Three things there, guys. His sheep hear His voice. Jesus knows who they are and they follow Him. And you know, it's interesting because I've seen sheep herders out in California and they drive the sheep.

And I've seen them in the Middle East and the sheep follows the shepherd. And they know the shepherd's voice. And you can get all these sheep and a pen from different shepherds and when those shepherds call them, they go to that shepherd.

[ 27 : 33 ] And then they follow Him. They follow Him. It's amazing to see, really. So certain is the Lord as to who will be saved, who He's going to save.

He has written their names down in the book of life before the foundation of the universe was laid. And He wrote it in ink or in stone.

No erasures in that book. The truth is that when men and women hear this call, the call of the Lord, most people flee from His presence.

Most people flee from His presence. This is exactly what happened in John chapter 6. A little lengthy, but it's well worth listening to. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to Me shall not hunger and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you've seen Me and yet do not believe. By the way, He had just done incredible miracles.

[ 28 : 55 ] Fed probably 20,000 women and children. Had guys walking on water. I mean, you name it. Then they said, can you show us a sign?

All that the Father gives Me, listen to this, guys, all that the Father gives Me will come to Me. By the way, the Reformers called that irresistible grace.

That doctrine is slammed every day of the year. But Jesus said, all that the Father has given Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.

Have you ever come to Jesus? Drawn by the Father? They're not going to cast you out. For I have come down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day. People say, oh, He lost Judas.

[ 29 : 57 ] Judas was never a believer. He was not given to Christ by the Father. He was there for a reason, but He was not given by the Father.

People say, well, it was just unfair, but Judas. No, Judas chose to betray the Master. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life,

and I will raise Him up on the last day.

So what did the Jews do? They bowed down and worshipped Him. No, the Jews grumbled about Him because He said, I am the bread that came down from Heaven.

They said, is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, I've come down from Heaven?

Jesus answered them, and remember, they were grumbling privately, quietly among themselves. Do not grumble among yourselves. No one, boy, listen to this, no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.

[ 31 : 12 ] and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets and they will be caught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me, not that anyone has seen the Father except He who is from God.

He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died.

This is the bread that comes down from Heaven so that one may eat of it and not die. I'm the living bread that came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread that I give for the life of the world is My flesh.

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, how can this man give us his flesh to eat? And Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, My blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.

[ 32 : 31 ] And the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father. So whoever feeds on Me, He will live because of Me. By the way, that's not cannibalism.

This is the bread that came down from Heaven. Not like the bread your fathers ate and died.

Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.

Jesus said these things in the synagogue as He taught at Capernaum. Earlier, they had said to Him, You've only given us bread one day. Moses fed us for 38 years.

Jesus had to point out Moses didn't give you anything. That came down from My Father. When many of His disciples heard it, they said, This is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? They didn't want to listen to it. But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples, the followers there, were grumbling about this, said to them, Do you take offense at this?

[ 33 : 41 ] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.

But there are some of you who do not believe. And I have a feeling He turned to Judas when He said that. And it says, For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was that would betray Him.

And He said, That is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted to Him by My Father. I don't want to offend anybody here, but the late R.C. Sproul said he went straight to Calvinism with that verse.

He said, No one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father. If this is the saddest verse in all Scripture, I don't know what is.

After this, many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. Boy, that's sad now.

[ 34 : 56 ] That will grip you. They walked away from the Savior and Lord and King of the universe. And I'm going to tell you about the church in the 21st century.

Across the Western world especially, when they hear that very message, you read those verses of Scripture, they still leave.

They still leave or they fire the pastor. Paul Worsher preached this message. He was scheduled for seven messages that week in a church.

Sunday morning he preached this message and the pastor went to him right after the message and says, we won't need you anymore. You may return home. Booted him out.

There's another very sad passage found in the book of Revelation. Men do not want Jesus to look at the extent that they will go to keep away from Him.

[ 36 : 02 ] Revelation chapter 6 beginning in verse 12. When He opened the sixth seal, I looked and behold, there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth.

The full moon became like blood and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone slave and free hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains calling to the mountains and rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

We don't normally associate lambs with wrath but this one is for the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand? I've said many times here we have the greatest prayer service in history. Millions maybe billions of people are crying out and I think that some of those people are alive today that will be doing this. Particularly for the raptures today.

[ 37 : 27 ] they are crying out but they are not praying to the God of heaven. They are not praying to the Holy Trinity. They are praying to rocks and mountains and begging them to fall on them and hide them from Jesus.

What happens when a mountain falls on you? You are crushed. You are pulverized. You are pulverized. And they cry out fall on us and hide us from Jesus in this great day of His wrath.

And let me tell you something guys that day is approaching. And I'm going to suggest to you guys in here probably every one of us have family members or certainly friends that unless there's genuine repentance and belief they're going to enter into that day of wrath.

We need to be busy doing what the pastors and Dan's been telling us to do. So what are we going to make of all this? The words of Revelation 3.20 are unrelated to salvation.

The saved are those who repent and believe. Part of repenting and believing is confessing.

Basically all the things we have been studying up to this point.

[ 38 : 56 ] But remember also salvation ultimately is of the Lord. He is the one who saves. And I've said this before salvation is far too important to be left in the hands of fallen men.

So until next time we're going to pray. And Father again we thank you for the grace demonstrated in the life the death the resurrection the ascension the intercession the advocacy and the return of King Jesus.

Lord the time is short. John told us 2,000 years ago these are the last days and if they were last days 2,000 years ago what are they today?

Would that you would find the men and women of Highland Park Baptist Church busy with your work in these last days?

What a joy that would be. Lord the fields are widened to harvest may we be those working in the fields until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back.

[ 40 : 28 ] We pray in his name. Amen. Amen.