

JOHN THREE, TWENTY-SEVEN

Intro: I have been asked to speak on this verse, and am glad to do so.

- A reading of vv. 22-36 reveals that these are the words of John the Baptist.

It also indicates that they were words spoken about our Lord Jesus Christ--but not limited just to Him!

Spoken to John's disciples.

Furthermore, in the original the verse has a double negative so that if we were to translate it literally it would read something like this:

A man is not able to receive nothing, or not one thing, except it has been given to him out of heaven.

This is poor English, but it is very good Greek--and very strong Greek!

A double negative in the Greek intensifies the statement, and here indicates that there is not a single exception to this statement.

The way it is translated here is excellent. "A man can receive nothing . . ."--ever, under any conditions. This is an absolute truth which always applies.

But we must also be careful to note that this statement is made about the Son of God, and in a secondary way, about His disciples. There is no question about the sovereignty of God over the people of the world, but that is not the subject here. John is speaking particularly about the Son of God as a Man and the people of God in general.

Then, it would seem that this was a basic principle upon which the whole life and ministry of John the Baptist was built. This is the way he looked at his work. This is the way he looked at the ministry of the Lord Jesus. This is the way he looked at his disciples and the Lord's disciples.

What did it do for him to believe this? Several things, which are apparent in his ministry as recorded in the Word.

I. IT KEPT HIM FROM JEALOUSY.

This, undoubtedly, was what prompted his disciples to come to him with this report.

For a long time John's voice had been practically the only voice that was being heard. Then the Lord Jesus came. But forget for the moment that He was the Lord; this was a matter which had been settled long ago in John's heart. He knew

that there was only one place that true blessing could come from, and that was God!

And so he could rejoice.

Cf. our Lord's disciples in Mark 9:38 ff.

Let us rejoice when there is blessing regardless of where the blessing comes from--because it all ultimately comes from Him. See John 3:29.

II. IT INSPIRES US WITH GREATER ZEAL AND GREATER DEVOTION TO THE LORD.

This is evident in John's answer which continues right down to v. 36 (and not just through v. 30).

What an inspiration people are who are walking with the Lord and who love the Lord and who experience His blessing.

Think of the Christians you know, or have known--pastors--Bible teachers--people you only know through their books, etc.

Cf. F. B. Meyer and Spurgeon.

Also, Dr. John Henry Strong--as well as his book, Jesus, The Man of Prayer. *Little girl - Are you like Jesus? Why not?*

III. IT HELPS US TO REMEMBER OUR OWN GREAT AND CONTINUING NEED.

What John said about the Lord applied in an even greater way to himself. And there is abundant evidence that he knew it.

Think of what he said about himself when he spoke of the coming Messiah: "There cometh one after me . . ." "I am not worthy . . ." Or, think of his answer to the delegation from Jerusalem: "I am the voice . . ."

Closely related to this is the fact that

IV. IT HELPS US NOT TO HAVE OUR OWN HEARTS LIFTED UP WITH PRIDE WHEN THE LORD BRINGS BLESSING.

No one probably ever had the success that John did, and yet it never made him puffed up.

Do you remember Paul's words to the Corinthian church on this subject? Cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-7,

"Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the in-

crease. So, then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."

Or, 1 Cor. 4:7,

For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

In his book, Dr. John Strong tells an incident in the life of Hudson Taylor. He records it as follows:

"Years ago in the good old 'horse and buggy days,' Dr. Somerville was jogging along a country road with Husdaon Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, and was commenting on the satisfaction Mr. Taylor must feel in having been personally selected by God to inaugurate that vast work for China. Mr. Taylor brushed the thought aside like a temptation, and replied, 'It has often seemed to me as though God looked the whole world over to find a man who was weak enough to do his work; and when at last he found me, he said, 'He is weak enough--he will do.'" See pp. 48, 49.

And, then, again closely related,

V. IT KEEPS US TRUSTING THE LORD FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE BLESSING, ALWAYS SEEKING DIRECTION FROM HIM, ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS GLORY.

Dr. Kenneth Wuest, in his Expanded Translation of John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease," translates it, "It is necessary in the nature of the case for that One to become constantly greater but for me constantly to be made less."

VI. IT GIVES DIGNITY AND COURAGE TO US IN OUR MINISTRY.

Was it easy for John the Baptist to call Israel to repentance?

Was it easy for him to expose the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees?

Was it easy for him to tell Herod he had no right to have his brother's wife?

Think of the Apostle Paul and his faithfulness to the Word of God in spite of the pressures and in spite of the difficulties he experienced everywhere he went.

Could it be that the reason we have so many wishy-washy servants today is because we have lost sight of this truth John has given us?

VII. IT ENCOURAGES US IN THE TIMES OF TESTING.

Paul wrote to the Philippian church,  
"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).

Think of our Lord Himself.

How long was John the Baptist in prison before he was be-headed? We do not know exactly, but think of his steadiness through all of that time.

Concl: We can see what this verse did for John the Baptist,  
and how its truth was used in the lives of others in  
the Word of God. Now the point is this: Can we see it in our  
own lives?