

For God So Loved the World

John 3:16-21

Reading: 1 John 4:7-15

Bethany Baptist Church

April 5, 2020

...pray...

The most popular Bible verse in the world states:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him **shall** not perish but have eternal life.*

That claim means there are only **two** kinds of people in the world...

Those who will *live forever* and those who will *perish forever*.

Those who will be *pardoned* and those who will be *judged*

Those who *practice truth* and those who *practice evil*.

Men & women who *run to the Light* and women & men who *hide in the dark*.

Believers in God's Son and ***unbelievers***.

Only **two** types of people...

Let's turn together to the world's most popular verse: John 3:16 (read 16-21).

The apostle **John** has just documented **Jesus'** late-night conversation with Israel's premier teacher, the aging Pharisee, **Nicodemus**.

Nicodemus was looking for *eternal life*. Jesus' answered:

"You must be born again."

"He who believes in the Son of Man has eternal life."

That *ended* the conversation. At that point, John *picks up the narrative* to help us *better understand* Jesus' words.

This morning we'll conclude John 3's life-changing message about *saving faith*. Let's outline it with three simple words:

vv. 16-17 Salvation.

vv. 18-19 Judgment

vv. 20-21 Evidence

Why did God *send* His Son into the world of humanity, *drowning* in sin?

1. **State John 3:16.** Don't rush past the little word "*for*" – it signals that the Bible's most popular promise was written to explain Jesus' last words to Nicodemus (15): "*whoever believes will, [in the Son of Man], have eternal life.*"
 - a. This is John's **first** mention of *eternal life* in his gospel.
 - b. John wants to make Jesus' point (15) very clear; after all, he wrote his gospel to encourage people to *believe* in Jesus and receive *eternal life*.
2. John's *initial explanation* (16,17) can be seen as a simple sequence of God's *motive*, God's *method*, and God's *mission*.
3. God *loved*. His *motive* is as *simple* and *unfathomable* as that. In fact, the **NT** stresses that the God of the Bible (OT/NT) *is* love and *acts* from love.
 - a. Elsewhere John will write: *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
 - b. Specifically, God loved the *world*. That **doesn't** mean the *round brown ball of dirt* we stand on!
 - c. The *world* (Gr. **κοσμος**) here refers to *humankind* – men and women, girls and boys, from every *location* and *generation* of history.
 - d. God created each of us *intentionally, personally, and in His image*. And He *loves* us. Paul will soon write: *But God demonstrated His own love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - e. God's *love* motivated Him to *send* His Son.
4. God *sent* (17) or *gave* (16) His Son *into* the world *for* the world. That was His *method* for demonstrating His *love*.
 - a. To *give* (16) suggests that God's Son is God's *gift* to the *world*.
 - i. Jesus is a *precious* gift! John's language describes Him as the Father's *one and only, unique, Son*.

- ii. The Apostle Paul referred to Jesus as God's *indescribable* gift; **too generous, too precious, too important, too unique, too undeserved to wrap our heads around!**
 - b. To *send* (17) suggests God's *intent*; that God commissioned His Son with a great *task – salvation*. To *send* implies *mission*....
- 5. God *mission* was to provide *eternal life* to anyone and everyone who might *believe* in the person and work of Jesus, His Son.
 - a. *Here, again, is the theme of the Gospel of John: eternal life is guaranteed to every individual who believes in God's Son.*
 - b. Here, in a sense, is the *foundation* of every Gospel promise you love!
 - i. **Rom 1:16, 17** – *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes ... "but the just shall live by faith."*
 - ii. **Eph 2:8-9** – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
 - iii. **1 Pt 1:3, 9** - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...(9) obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*
- 6. God's *loving intent* in sending His Son was **not judgment** but *pardon* – a *pardon* granted by the *forgiveness* of sins with the outcome of *eternal life*.
 - a. The *only condition* God places on you receiving eternal life is your *repentance* and *faith* in His Son.
 - b. You can avoid *eternal judgment* and *condemnation* and be granted *eternal life* by *trusting* that Jesus' *death* pays for your sins, and that His *resurrection* guarantees that His promises are true.

For God so loved the world that He gave, He sent, His one and only Son. You must believe in Him!

God did not send His Son to *judge*, but the aftershock of Jesus' coming *brings judgment*.

1. Mankind is a *judged* race. We are each *born* under judgment; if no one intervenes to secure our pardon, we *die* under judgment.
 - a. You can *trace* that reality back to Genesis 3 and our first parents' *sin*, *sentencing*, and *punishment*.
 - b. And through Adam (Rm 5:12), *sin and death entered the world*, we each soon *sinned ourselves*, and we were all *justly condemned*.

2. But Someone *has* intervened! God sent Jesus to *secure* pardon for sinners. You **can** *escape judgment*. But how can God offer *pardon* and remain *just*? Let's **read vv.18&19** and then ask **two questions**:
 - a. *How do some escape judgment?*
 - b. *Why will some remain under judgment? (Read vv.18 &19).*

3. *How do some escape judgment?*
 - a. In an echo of **v.16**, John reminds us (19) that God gave His *one and only* Son, but he says it like this: *the **Light** has come into the world*.
 - b. An aspect of Jesus' *uniqueness* is that He is the moral *Light* of the world! And the *Light* has come, a fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah: "*And the people walking in darkness (that's us!) will see a great light (that's Jesus!)*."
 - c. You can *escape* God's judgment by *believing* in Him, or more specifically (18b), by *believing in the **name** of the one and only Son of God*.
 - i. The idea of "**name**" suggests *reputation = identity + character + work*.
 1. Jesus' *identity* is the *Son of God*, the *Son of Man*; *born of a virgin conceived by the Holy Spirit*. *Truly God, truly man*.

2. His **character** is perfect, “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”
 - a. Jesus lived in favor with God and men.
 - b. Even a fearful **Pontus Pilate** admitted: “I have found **no** guilt in this Man ... **nothing** deserving death has been done by Him.”
3. Yet His **work** was to offer up the temple of His body on the cross, to bear the sins of His people as the ultimate Passover *Lamb of God*, and then to be raised on the third day and ascend to the Father’s right hand, where He lives forever (right now!) to make intercession for the saints.
- d. **This** is what you **must** believe (*identity, character, work*) to escape God’s judgment and enter God’s kingdom!
- e. As Paul explained in **Romans**, your faith in Jesus justifies you, and secures your pardon.
 - i. **Rom 3:26** – In giving His Son, God is both **just** and the **justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus.
 - ii. **Rom 5:1** – Therefore, having been **justified** by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii. **Rom 8:1** - Therefore, there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - iv. **Rom 8:31-34** - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a **charge** against God’s elect? **God is the one who justifies**; ³⁴ who is the one who **condemns**? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.
- f. By faith in His name, you are forgiven and **free!** (PAUSE)

4. *So why will some **remain** under judgment?*

a. Because they do **not believe** in Jesus. **Read v.18.**

i. Everything the Christian truly *believes* about Jesus the rest of the world *minimizes, puts off, explains away, ignores, or ridicules*. In the end, they *reject* Christ....

b. Because *lost* men/women *love darkness*. Jesus is the *Light of the World*, yet many *love darkness*.

i. The *darkness* is safe & comfortable because their *deeds are evil*.

ii. No sinner wants the *shame* of stepping into the *light*.

But there are no *neutral corners*, you *can't sit on the fence* forever; you either *come to the Light*, or *remain under judgment!*

And so John concludes by re-examining the evidence that *acquits* some, but *condemns* many. Read vv.20-21.

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1. Johns loves to paint w/ *contrasting* colors: ***eternal life*** vs. *eternal perishing*; ***salvation*** vs. *judgment*; ***to believe*** vs. *not believe*; ***practice truth*** vs. *practice evil*; ***The Light*** vs. *darkness*; ***coming to the Light*** vs. *hiding in the darkness*.
 - a. Here's one more: *everyone* vs. *one... everyone* (20) vs. *he* (21).
2. Christian, why do so many people *hear* the same Gospel promises you love, and *run away*!
 - a. They *practice evil*. The grammar (present tense) in v.20 pictures the *many* whose daily lives are characterized by *sinfulness*. The NT warns us that ***all*** *have sinned...there is **no** fear of God before their eyes*.
 - b. They *hate the Light*. There is really **no** such thing as an “*I’m okay, you’re okay*” attitude towards Jesus! You either *love Him* or *hate Him*. Jesus said (Matt 12) you are “*either for Me or against Me.*”
 - c. They *refuse the Light* and *hide in the darkness*.
 - i. When your *toddler* does something they know is *wrong*, ?do they do it in the *middle of the living room floor*, or do they *go away* and *hide* their sin!?!
 - ii. Did Grandma ever tell you *nothing good happens **after** dark*?
 - iii. John is telling you that **nothing** *good* happens **in** the *dark*!
 - d. But *darkness* is exactly where practically *everyone* lives! Because to *step* into the light invites *exposure* and *condemnation* and *shame....*

3. But John *concludes* (21) by assuring us that there are a *few* who will *practice the truth*.
 - a. John's *present-tense grammar* pictures the woman/man who has turned to a *lifestyle of doing the truth*.
 - b. He **wasn't** *born in the Light*, but our man has **come** *to the Light*; he's **no** longer *afraid* of the Light.
 - c. **Why...?** Because God has *done a work* in him ("grace"), and now our friend's works are clearly produced through His *relationship with God*.
 - i. **Eph 2:10** – *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that we should walk in them.*
 - ii. **Phil 2:13** – *For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

4. I love the contrast of *truth* vs. *evil*. You might have expected John to speak of **good** vs. *evil*. Here are a few implications of *truth* set against *evil*:
 - a. **Truth** is not something that is *abstract*, or *amoral*. *Truth* has a *moral* quality to it. And so *truth* can be *practiced*, not simply *believed*.
 - b. Setting *truth* in contrast to *evil* implies that the *moral good* that truth defines is *objective* and **unchanging**.
 - c. So we aren't simply called to *evaluate/understand* the *truth* (Gospel), we are called *out of our darkness* to *trust* & thus *live* the *truth*.

Where are you w/ all this? Are you standing in the light? Are you hiding with the crowd in the dark?

What are you doing? Are you practicing the truth? Or are you still doing evil?

What do you love? Do you love the Light? Do you hate the Light because you're afraid of being exposed? Of being called to confess and repent?

Don't be afraid: God is love! God is merciful! God is forgiving!

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

I urge you to come out of the darkness, and embrace the Light!

I beg you to believe in Jesus, God's Son.

...pray...