

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD . . .
By Ron Harvey

TEXT: John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Herein is the beautiful gospel of our great God. This is the good news in one short bible verse. It is the greatest news that ever came down from heaven to earth. It is the gospel in miniature. If you had no other verse of Scripture, you would still have the wonderful terms of salvation.

Is it not amazing what God can say in 25 words? God is the greatest writer who ever lived. God can say in one little phrase what men cannot say in many volumes. And here is the whole gospel revealed in one little verse.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

This verse is known and memorized by countless millions throughout the whole world. I dare say that virtually every one of us in this congregation has known this verse since childhood. It is a very beautiful verse. It is very eloquent. It is very succinct. And it is very powerful.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now the gospel is the good news that God has provided a way of salvation through Jesus Christ. And therefore, it is the most important message in all the world for those who are lost and in their sins. It is the only message of salvation. And therefore, the preaching of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ is the primary work of the church.

The Scriptures say that the gospel has inherent power to save.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;

Romans 1:16

It is the power of God unto salvation. It is not the personality of the preacher, not the eloquence of the sermon that saves, but it is the power of the gospel itself.

And so, if a sinner is to be saved, it is by the clear presentation of the gospel wherein is great power.

But the gospel of Christ is every bit as much for the believer as it is for the unbeliever.

See Col. 1:21-23

It seems to me that we must begin our inspection of our text by acknowledging the most basic truth herein contained and that is,

I. God loves us.

I would like for each and every one of us here this morning to think about this simple concept.

God loves us.

It seems that he would not love us. We are not lovable. We have all sinned against him. We have lived our lives ignoring him in large part. We have despised Him. We have rejected Him. And because we are sinners through and through, we can hardly believe that he loves us.

And yet, the message of this verse is that He loves us.

God so loved the world.

Now, when it says, God so loved the world, I don't think it is suggesting here that God loved the earth and the moon and the stars and the galaxies and the physical elements of the universe. But it is suggesting that God loves people. That is the simple declaration of this verse.

This verse is not suggesting that God loves his whole creation, though he may give some respect to what he has created. But this verse specifically declares that he loves human beings. God so loved the world that he gave his Son.

God did not give his Son primarily for the physical universe, but he gave his Son for human beings. God never loved fallen angels like this. Angels sinned and fell from God's pleasure and he never loved them unto redemption. There is no hope for the angels who fell. And they shall burn in eternal hell forever with no hope.

But, God so loved human beings that he gave his only begotten Son.

We must get down on our knees and thank our God that he loves us.

I think I can say by the authority of this verse that God loves the world of people. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight.

And if you are a person, then God loves you.

This is quite a revelation because many people have the idea that God is some austere, hard-hearted, mean-spirited God who makes unreasonable demands on us and who is never happy with us and who disciplines us unmercifully with a rod of retribution.

But I say quite certainly that God loves you. And by that I mean that God's heart is moved with feeling for you.

You know how you feel when you truly love your children. Why, you feel emotion on the inside and you feel great compassion for them. And you take great joy in them and you overlook their faults and you always do good unto them. And you love them.

And I want you to contemplate this morning on this great, monumental truth. God loves you.

And I believe it is correct to say that in some sense God loves the world of human beings.

Now I don't mean that God loves you only if you are the elect of God, though there is a special, effective love for them, but I mean that God loves you if you are a human being. This is what this verse says. It says,

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

If you are a sinner, you may come to God because his very essence is love. If you come to him, he will not cast you out because he loves you. You may think that you cannot come to him, but he has made a way for you to come.

Now, I want you to recognize the extent of God's love for you.

II. God so loves us.

This little word "so" tells us that God not only loves us, but he loves us with a great love.

Now, we can't imagine why he loves us. We are mere creatures. We are his created beings. We are meant to be his servants. And yet, we are sinners and rebels. And yet, he "so" loved us.

How much? So much that he gave his only begotten Son.

Let me just say that we will never fully know how much he loves us because we will never fully understand the infinite value of his Son. Let's just say, he loves us more than we can understand.

When you go home today and when you lay your head on your pillow tonight, will you take a moment and contemplate on this wonderful truth that God loves you? We must always remember that God is in love with us. And perhaps this great truth will lead us to love him.

III. God's love for us is the origin of our redemption.

Many think they are saved because they did something. But this verse conveys the most basic Bible concept that there is only redemption for human beings if God does something. It says, God so loved the world.

If you never understand anything else about the Bible, please understand that redemption originates in the heart of God. It does not originate in the heart of the sinner. But it has its foundation in the infinite love of God. You see we can only be saved if he loves us. If he had no love for us, then he would take no action and he would leave us to our just penalty for sin.

It is the most basic of Bible doctrines that we cannot save ourselves. We are lost and we are spiritually dead in natural condition. And we can generate no momentum toward God.

But in the heart of God, for whatever reason, there is love for pitiful human beings. I can't imagine that God would love me. And I bet you can't imagine that God would love you. But this verse says, God so loved the world.

So we see that God's love for us is the origin of our redemption. But now note that,

IV. God's action is the cause of our redemption.

For it says, God so loved the world that he gave.

You know, it is easy to say, "I love you," isn't it? But if you truly love someone, it translates into action. If your child is in the backyard and he is shivering and cold and hungry and dirty, what good does it do for you to look out and say, "I love you, son." But, if you love him you will open the back door and bring him in and feed him and bath him and put warm clothes on him and hold him. You see, love translates into action.

And God so loved the world that he gave . . .

That word "gave" is an action verb. God did something because he loved us. God felt something inside of him that is called love and because he felt it, he did something, he gave.

And so, we see that redemption from sin and redemption from the penalty of sin is caused by an action of God. And that action here is called giving.

God so loved the world that he gave.

Now this giving that God did occurred when we were yet sinners. And it occurred when we were helpless to save ourselves.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Romans 5:6

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

I want us all to know for a certainty that we are saved because God first loved us. And not only that, but we are saved because God took action – he gave his Son.

Now we have seen that the love of God is the origin of our redemption and his action is the cause of our redemption, but now we see that,

V. Jesus is the sum and substance of our redemption.

God so loved the world that he gave. But, not just any gift would redeem us. It must be a gift of his only begotten Son. There was only one gift that would redeem mankind and that was the most precious gift of all – Jesus.

And God sent his one-of-a-kind Son Jesus into the world and ultimately delivered him into the hands of wicked men and the Father watched from above as his Son was tortured and killed. And God poured out wrath upon Jesus, wrath that was appropriate for wicked sinners.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

And now salvation is all wrapped up in His Son. No one else died for sinners - only Jesus. Salvation is in Him and none other.

Now some people say that it doesn't really matter what we believe. Some believe in Allah, some believe in Buddah some believe in this god or that god.

But there was only one sacrifice for the sins of the world and that was the sacrifice of Jesus.

And if you are to be saved, then you must come to Him. He must be your substitute. Salvation is in a person and that person is Jesus.

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by me.*

Jesus is the sum and substance of redemption.

But let's go a little further in the text:

VI. Faith is the instrument of redemption.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Now when the Bible teaches that faith is the instrument whereby we are saved, this eliminates all other instruments.

It eliminates moral goodness. If you ask 100 people on the street if they think they are going to heaven I bet 95 will say yes. And if you ask them why, 90 of those will say because they are pretty good.

But the Bible says there is none good, no not one.

When the Bible says we are saved by faith,

It eliminates good works. There is nothing that we can do to earn our way. And a preacher can preach that until he is blue in the face and the masses will never understand it, because they think men are saved by doing good. People think they are saved by religiously attending Mass once a week. People think they are saved by being religious. People think they are saved by uttering a prayer.

But, the Bible says we are saved by faith.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Believing is the only way unto salvation. But believing is not a mere intellectual assent, but is with the heart.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:10

VII. Those in the world are the subjects of redemption.

It says,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now we loudly proclaim here that God has an elect people whom he has chosen from the foundation of the world and that he effectively brings those elect to redemption.

But there is a universal aspect to the gospel.

1. The gospel is to be preached to all nations. The Word of God is no longer the exclusive possession of the nation of Israel. It was for a time, in the Old Testament. But now, the gospel has moved outside the borders of Israel and has gone to the Gentiles.

Jesus said, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. The gospel is to be preached to all people without exception. We don't try to hunt down the elect and then preach the gospel only to them. But we preach the gospel universally because it is God's business and his alone as to who is and who isn't elect. He knows whose names are written in the book of life – we don't.

3. The infinitely precious blood of Christ is sufficient to atone for all the sins of any and every man in all ages from the first man Adam to the last man yet to be born. There are some 5 billion people residing on the earth at this very moment. And there have been countless billions of people throughout history. And the blood of Jesus is sufficient for each one.

And therefore, our text says,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

VIII. Eternal life is the result of redemption.

Now when God saves a man he saves him from something and he saves him to something. And both are found in this verse.

1. God saves a man from perishing.

That is, a man is saved from the miseries of hell. He shall not go down to the pit. He shall not be separated from God and from all that is good and holy. He shall not burn in the lake of fire. He shall not die an eternal death.

Now don't think that perishing implies annihilation. The wicked would love it if that were so. They could laugh at God and mock him and in the end they would simply be extinguished.

When the wicked look down in the bottomless pit they will wish for annihilation. When the flames lap up at their resurrected bodies, they would only hope that they would be extinguished forever.

But their torment will go on and on forever.

But, God has graciously allowed us to escape such a fate.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.

2. God saves a man to everlasting life.

Now this is not mere everlasting existence, but everlasting life. Everlasting existence in the fires of hell is the lot of the wicked. But for those who believe in Jesus, it is life forever and life abundantly. It is life in the light and warmth of God's presence and as the recipient of God's everlasting goodness.

CONCLUSION

Let me encourage each and every one of you this morning to hear the gospel in this great verse and to respond to it in simple faith. Now remember, the gospel is not only for those who have never believed before. It is our duty to believe the gospel day in and day out. The gospel is for lost sinners and mature Christians alike.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.