

**John 3: 16; “ For God so Loved the World”, Sermon # 17 in the series –  
“That all May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
as a Communion Sermon on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

The most important doctrine of all doctrines from the human standpoint is faith; having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11: 6) Faith is the most important doctrine because if you have saving faith in Jesus Christ, you presently have eternal life. Our Lord Jesus says in John Chapter 5, verse 24 - “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” This morning we want to 1<sup>st</sup> of all look at the most precious gift God has ever given to the world. 2<sup>nd</sup> – We want to look at the most generous offer God has ever made to the world. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – We want to look at the most wonderful outcome for the one believing in Jesus.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let’s look at the most precious gift God has ever given to the world.**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”. Let me begin by saying this; the salvation of any person who has a mind to be able to reason and think, depends upon their coming to understand and believe that God has love for them, a sinner. Many people in the world today do not seem to understand that they are a sinner. They do not believe that there is anything wrong with themselves. In their thinking, they believe that most of what they think and feel is right. They may occasionally be wrong in their thinking, but they do not believe that they are fundamentally flawed in their mind and their heart. They believe that they could justify their conduct in the sight of any man, and they even believe that they could justify their thoughts and their conduct before God Himself, without their ever being converted to Christ. This is a terrible misconception, because if it is true, then why did God have to give His only begotten Son? Many of these same people believe that God is love in His Essence, and therefore He would never think of sending anybody to hell for their having committed sins against Him. If you ask them what sin is, they do not often think of it in terms of offending or dishonoring the holy God. They think of it in terms of hurting other people, or hurting themselves. They often think of sins of the mind and heart as making personal mistakes in judgment. They lightly dismiss or rationalize away, why they or other people sin in their hearts. Sometimes they will rationalize why either they or others commit some of the worst of sins. They want to believe that there are good reasons why people are involved in any of the false religions of the world, or why they might become fornicators, or adulterers; or

homosexuals, thieves, or drunkards. They want to accept other people in their sin if they can, because they want to be seen as kind and loving people themselves, at all costs.

If people like this go to church, they make sure that they go to a church where they will not hear the truth of the Bible; that they, and all men, are sinners by nature; that they are opposed to God and the keeping of all of His holy commandments in their hearts, and that is why they need to be converted. Especially the more moral people in this world, those who want to be good and to do good from generally right human motives, they want desperately to believe that most people are basically good in their nature. They may need a little help, but they do not need Christ in order for God to approve of them, or to have their heart and life change. Just get people into the right self-help program, and tell them that God loves them just as they are in their sin, and this is supposedly what it means to become a better person. Therefore, since this is supposedly true, many people do not see their need to be converted, or to be radically changed in their heart. But as we have seen in past sermons, the Bible states very clearly, and the Lord Jesus stated it right out to Nicodemus in the verses before this great verse; that in order to enter the kingdom of God and go to heaven you must be born again.

The reason that we must be born again is because we are basically evil in our nature. This is the condition in which we are born. We are opposed to God's word, and we are opposed to God's way of doing things in relation to our life in particular. We are born into this world, spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins because of the sin of our first forefather Adam. We are alienated from the life of God. Since Adam sinned by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin came into his very nature. Immediately he died spiritually. And eventually he would die physically. And then when he later had children, he passed this sinful nature on to all of his children, and down to us as well. He was constituted by God as our Federal Head, the head of our whole race, to represent us. And since he was created upright in his heart by God, in the beginning, he had the freedom of will that he could choose whether he would obey God's one command to him not to eat, and he chose to disobey. He ate of the fruit, and thus our whole race was plunged into sin, and ever since, we all have had to face the consequences of death. And, certainly all of us would have had to face the eternal punishment of hell, unless a remedy was found. God was the only One who could find a solution to this great predicament which man had brought himself into. God could not violate His own justice, nor could He compromise the Divine Government of the universe, by simply overlooking man's sin. No, God knew that "the soul that sins must die"; and not just die physically, but perish eternally. This he had promised to Adam that He would do if he broke this original command. This is still what He promises to do to all of us well unless we believe in Christ. God must be faithful to His own justice, or He would be guilty Himself of

tolerating sin. But God cannot tolerate or excuse or overlook sin. His holy essential nature will not allow Him to do it. He must deal with it by punishing it, and punishing it forever.

But let us understand that God the Father had the wisdom, and the love, to deal with man's greatest problem, sin, by giving us His greatest gift; His Son. Never has there been a greater or more costly gift given by God. God could have righteously and justly let every man who is descended from Adam, perish in their sins. He could have left every man to himself. But let us see this morning that we not only have a just God, we have a loving God; a God who is righteous, also, in how He showed His love. Turn with me over to Titus Chapter 3, verse 4. "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." This is righteous love in God for His fallen creature man; He would knowingly devise this great plan of mercy which would also satisfy His justice. For until justice could be satisfied, mercy could never be shown. You see, God knew before the foundation of the world, before He ever created Adam, that Adam would not be able to stand in his own righteousness. This text shows us that God so loved the world that He would give His Son for man's redemption; his being purchased back out of his slavery to sin, his being brought back into God's good favor, by Christ His only begotten Son becoming a man. God's love for all mankind was seen in His giving of Christ; sending Him into this fallen world of sin and misery and woe so that mankind would not perish. Christ would become a righteous substitute for all the fallen, helpless sinners who would believe in Him. All of this, the plan, the sending, the purchase, and the application of that redemption to those chosen of God in election, came about because God the Father so loved the world.

God's love cost Him His very heart. It was not something that He did not feel. Listen to W.G.T. Shedd in His *Dogmatic Theology* Volume 2, Page 386 – "Though it was God the Son, and not God the Father, who became incarnate, and suffered, and died, it by no means follows that the first person of the Trinity made no self-sacrifice in this humiliation and crucifixion of the Incarnate Second Person." "He gave up to agony and death, his "dear," and "beloved" Son. He passed the sword, as Zechariah 13 : 7 says, through "the man who was his fellow". Such scriptures imply that the redemption of sinful man caused God the Father a species of sorrow. The sorrow of "bruising and putting to grief" (Isa. 53 : 10) the Son of his love ; the Son who is "in the bosom of the Father," (John 1 : 18) "The self-sacrifice, therefore, that is made by the Son in giving himself to die for sinners, involves a self-sacrifice made by the Father in surrendering the Son for this purpose." "No person of the Godhead, even when He works officially, works exclusively of the others." "The unity of being and nature between Father and Son makes the act of self-sacrifice in the salvation of man common to both. "He that hath seen me hath

seen the Father.” “I and my Father are one.” (John 14: 9 and 10: 30) “The Mediator,” says Augustine (Trinity, IV. xix.), “was both the offerer and the offering ; and he was also one with Him to whom the offering was made.”

“And this does not conflict with the doctrine that the Divine essence is incapable of suffering.” “The Divine impassibility means that the Divine nature cannot be caused to suffer from any external cause.” “Nothing in the created universe can make God feel pain or misery.” “But it does not follow that God cannot himself do an act which He feels to be a sacrifice of feeling and affection, and in so far an inward suffering.” “When God gave up to humiliation and death his only begotten Son, he was not utterly indifferent, and unaffected by the act.” “It was as truly a sacrifice for the Father, to surrender the beloved Son, as it was for the Son to surrender himself.” “The Scriptures so represent the matter.” “God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son.” “God spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up.” “When the Father in the phrase of the prophet, ‘awoke the sword against the man who was His fellow,’ He likewise pierced Himself.” (End of quote) And I would add, God truly did so love the world, that in His giving He felt all the holy affections love that God alone can feel; He felt this towards His Son in the giving of Him for fallen sinful mankind. The Father loves all of what He has created, but He cannot love sin. Toward that He has a fixed and inveterate hatred. But towards mankind, because He created them, He felt the pity of a Father, also, to redeem for Himself a people, when he saw what they would do to themselves in their sin. His purpose in love, before the foundation of the world, was to give His Son. Will you not remember the love of the Father as you partake of the communion in just a few minutes? It is because the Father gave His Son that you now have eternal life, dear Christian.

**2ndly – We want to look at the most generous offer God has ever made to the world.**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish....” I have already shown you that man’s natural state is not one given to their believing in Christ, because people by nature do not see their need of Him. And even if a Christian does tell them of their need of Christ, they still will not desire to seek for salvation on their own, apart from grace, because their heart is naturally opposed to it. But God, having so loved the world that He gave His Son, He also shows His kindness and generosity to every person who hears the gospel, in making to them a genuine and sincere offer of salvation so that they might be saved. He does this by having those who preach to them the gospel, and share with them the gospel, proclaim to them His offer of reconciliation by their saying, in the words of the Bible, “Whoever will believe” should not perish; “whoever will believe, shall have everlasting life”. The wording itself shows us that “the world” which is spoken of here, the world that God so loved, He gave His only Begotten Son for, is not simply to be limited to the elect of God. The words “whoever”, and “should not” or “might not” perish do not pertain

to election. None of God's elect shall ever perish. Although election is a true doctrine and is clearly taught in many places in the scriptures, it is not being taught here. The free offer of Christ, salvation, and eternal life, is to be given to all people everywhere.

This truth should cause us to see that there is a general love which God has, in the gospel, for all of mankind. It is a will of desire that they not perish. It is a will of desire that all men everywhere come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, and be saved. This is not the same thing as His showing them His electing love and saving grace. If that were the case, then all men everywhere would be saved. But this is God's coming down to the level of every sinner everywhere, of whatever background, of whatever race, of whatever kind of sinner they are, and making His appeal to them. He is saying in the gospel, "I love you as a sinner, so much, that I gave you (as a part of the world of lost sinners) My only begotten Son, to die in your place, as a substitute for your sins, if you will simply believe in Me." God always acts in salvation on two different levels; the level of Himself and His secret decree of Election, and the level of speaking to all men everywhere in the gospel. On this second level, He tells them what they must do to be saved. He tells them what their responsibilities are. Even though He makes it plain that salvation is not by their works, He tells them through the foolishness of the preaching of the gospel, that they must repent, and that they must believe in Christ. All of this, we know, takes special grace from God in the final analysis, but God always strives with the people who hear the gospel. He interacts with people on their own level, through what they have heard about Christ. And this striving with them by His Spirit in common grace, is to prove to Himself and to them that He has done righteously by them, whether they come to faith by His mighty grace, or whether they perish because they have rejected the gospel, and would not improve upon the common grace given to them in their hearing the gospel, by believing the good news.

I would beg you to consider, those of you who are not yet believers here in this place, God the Father is making to you a sincere offer of grace and salvation which He gives to you in the gospel. If you will come to Christ by faith, believing that what He has done in His righteous life, and His sacrificial death on the cross is sufficient to save you from your sins, you will not be turned away or cast out. You will be reconciled to God. Salvation is based upon the promise of the Father to save all of those who will believe in Jesus. Have you taken God at His Word and received into your heart and mind the truth of the gospel? The proof of Jesus' work being accepted by the Father is that He raised Jesus from the dead. He has gone to the cross and suffered for your sins. He was raised from the dead so that you could be declared righteous in God's sight. God imputes Christ's righteousness to you the sinner. He imputes your sins to Christ on the cross. You believe in what Jesus has done in your place; and you are saved. This is what we will now remember as we come down front. We have believed the testimony of the

Father concerning Christ. Our sins have all been forgiven, and we have been given the gift of eternal life because of the love of the Father, and the sacrifice of His Son. We will remember the Father's gift of Christ.

**3rd – We want to look at the most wonderful outcome for the one believing in Jesus.**

This is undoubtedly one of the most precious verses in all of the Bible, for it shows us God's love for all of mankind in the free offer of the gospel. But it is still more precious to us who have believed, and who will partake of this Supper because we have found God's promise to be true. We have believed in God's Son. We have received eternal life. We can never lose what God has given to us, if our heart has truly been regenerated. Why? Because salvation is the gift of God. Our faith and the outcome of our salvation is all in His faithful hands. I want you to turn with me to a couple of verses before we partake of the Supper. The first is Romans 5: 6-11. "For when we were without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die." "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." "And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Notice how in verses 9 and 10 that there are no "mights" or "shoulds" which were written there. It is only the word "shall". "Having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." And, "much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." This is the most wonderful outcome for us who were such great sinners. We know that since Christ has reconciled us to God, that God will be faithful to keep seeing us in Christ. And He will also be faithful to keep giving us the grace to change to become more like Christ. What is just as wonderful as our being saved is that the precious blood of Christ continues to cleanse us from all sin day by day. When we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1: 9) And the life of the Lord Jesus is in our life to help us to do and to keep God's commandments. Where we fail, He will cleanse. Where we succeed in doing His will, all the glory belongs to Him. We are saved from wrath by Him and we are saved from all of our sins in this life by His powerful grace changing our hearts. All this because of the love of the Father. 1<sup>st</sup> John 3: 1 says – "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"