

For God
so loved
the world,
that He
gave ...

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.

[John 3:16]

The above verse has for centuries framed many a preachers message and stands as true today as when first uttered from the lips of the Son of God to a man named Nicodemus 2000 years ago. It is a succinct yet weighty statement and declaration of the Gospel of God with His Son at its centre and as its theme.

For God so loved the world

Unjust and somewhat hypocritical criticisms are often levelled against the God of Heaven that if He is a God of love then why is there so much suffering and injustice in the world – in other words, He is surely to blame by not resolving the causes. We need to face up to the fact that these situations are not of God's ordering but of man who often is not prepared to face the responsibility that is his in moulding the world into what it is today.

The Bible does not flatter man in its moral description of him exposing the corruption and guilt of each individual before the one true and holy God. The Lord Jesus Himself taught, ***“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”*** (Mark 7:21-23). Once we have grasped how totally sinful and unworthy we really are before God, we would find the unprecedented manner

in which **“God so loved”** us somewhat remarkable. To love your friends is one thing: to love your enemies by sacrificing for them the most dearest to you for their good is something quite different.

That He gave His only begotten Son

It is set against this wretched and “unlovable” condition of man that the depth and reality of the love of God for His fallen creatures is expressed. With man unable to provide a remedy for his own perilous condition with the judgment of God bearing down upon him, God has taken action to further commend His love towards us in the provision of a Saviour, given at such great cost to Himself.

It was not a created being that God gave up and sent into the world many years ago to be that Saviour but His **“only begotten Son”**, one on an equality with Himself, of closest and dearest affection, for this is the essence of the term ‘only begotten’. It does not convey any thought of origin as some would deceive you into believing as the Son has always existed as God. There was a point in time however when He was born a man, **“the Man Christ Jesus”**, in order to give Himself up to the shameful death of Calvary’s cross. It was here that God’s eternal Son once suffered for man’s sin to provide so great a salvation for so great sinners as ourselves.

That whosoever believeth in Him

This expression of love is without partiality. The sacrifice of the Son on the cross has scope to embrace all of mankind, reaching across generations without restriction in race, gender, language, or status of any kind. It is not a matter of how guilty or good we think we are.

All can be saved whosoever would venture by faith upon Him as none will be refused, cast away or lost if they come in repentance and child like faith. Elsewhere the Son would say **“him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”** (John 6:37), male or female.

Should not perish

Those who place their confidence in the merits and work of the ***“only begotten Son”*** will never perish. This is more than ‘not dying’ physically. It is not being hurt of the second death, that dreadful experience of torment in the ***“lake of fire”*** (Revelation 20:15) where those who refuse to believe in the Son will suffer forever. Annihilation and reincarnation are not teachings of the Bible: these are myths of the devil and many are deceived thereby. Be warned.

But have everlasting life

In contrast to perishing, those who believe will become possessors of everlasting life that will ultimately convey them into the very presence and joy of God when life on earth ceases for them. This is one of many great blessings given to those who receive the Son. It is He alone who gives true, lasting and abundant life within the soul, quoting His words, ***“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”*** (John 10:10) in stark contrast to the vain, empty, purposeless, sin filled ‘life’ that the world at large claims that it has. Being possessors of the ‘life of God’ will not eliminate trials on earth from opposition. It may cost us severely but to refuse Christ, is to miss ‘life’ and perish.

Nicodemus, a religious man, was deeply affected by the words we have just considered. He became a believer in the Lord Jesus, casting aside his dead religion of works, and was content to identify Himself with Christ by assisting in taking His body from the cross and placing in a sepulchre until He rose bodily from the dead.

The truth that ***“God is love”*** (John 4:8) is indisputable. But we each need to bow to that love and believe upon and identify ourselves with the ***“only begotten Son”***. We will not only be eternally safe but be able to show the love of God towards those that offend us.