

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

For God So Loved the World John 3:16 Part 3

So many professing Christians seem to have no forward gears. They don't seem to be able to move forward in their pursuit of righteousness and holiness. They talk to their husbands or to their wives as they have always talked to them. They continue to grumble and complain. They continue to share things with friends and co-workers, which are unprofitable. They continue to be unconcerned for the lost and make no efforts to reach them. This is tragic.

Fortunately this is not true of all professing believers. It is truly a joy to be around believers who are pursuing holiness and clearly are making great strides in a positive direction. It is a wonderful thing to be around believers who are living the Christian life as it should be lived. But how are they doing it?

This leads us back to **John 3:16-21** which we began to study several weeks ago. Let me read the passage for you, **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (19) And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. (21) But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."**

This is a wonderful passage of Scripture which flows very nicely as I have shared with you from John 3:1-15. In John 3:1-15 we find Jesus talking to Nicodemus about the new birth. John 3:1-3 emphasized its necessity. John 3:4-8 emphasized its basic components. And John 3:9-15 emphasized its focus, which of course was Christ. The reason why this passage flows very nicely from John 3:16-21 is that these verses are the reflections of the Apostle John on the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus on the subject of the new birth.

Because these verses are the reflections of John on what he had just recorded in John 3:1-15 we have been asking the following question. What were the reflections of the Apostle John in John 3:16-21 that were generated by Jesus conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1-15? What is the very first reflection?

In response to John 3:1-15 the Apostle John first of all reflected on the love of God for the world (John 3:16). Let us look at the very first words of John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." John is telling us that the new birth would never have taken place if God did not love this world. John is telling us that the new birth would never have taken place if God did not love this very hostile place filled with His enemies. But God did love the world and this is what John initially reflects on. What else does the Apostle John reflect on in response to the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:1-15?

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In response to John 3:1-15 the Apostle John secondly reflected on God's rescue *mission* to the world (John 3:16-21). In reflecting on the rescue mission he begins by describing its most basic and fundamental component. And what was the rescue missions most basic and fundamental component?

John first of all described the rescue mission in terms of its *cost*. And what did this rescue mission cost God? Let us continue to read the verse, **"For God so loved the world (this hostile place filled with the enemies of God) that He gave His only begotten Son."** What did God's rescue mission cost Him? He gave up to death on the cross His only begotten Son or in other words "His unique Son" who had been with Him since the beginning. And of course why did He do this? He gave up His Son to death on the cross to pay the debt of our sins.

But John is not only concerned with describing God's rescue mission in terms of cost John also describes the rescue mission in terms of its *benefits*. Let us continue to read **John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."**

In describing the benefits of God's rescue mission, John begins by telling us that those who believe in Christ are the ones who will be benefited. Let us read the verse one more time, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him."**

The only people who are going to be benefited by God's rescue mission are those who choose to believe in Christ as He has been revealed in the scriptures, and of course those who do not choose to believe in Christ as He has been revealed in the scriptures will not benefit from God's rescue mission.

In describing the benefits of God's rescue mission John not only tells us who will be benefited but how they will be benefited. Let us continue to read **John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish. . ."** The first benefit of God's rescue mission for all those who believe is being delivered from God's final *judgment*. In other words the first benefit of God's rescue mission for all those who believe is being delivered from the eternal torment of hell, which is described as an unquenchable fire and where their worm will never die. Now that is good news for those who believe. In fact that is really good news. But there is more.

The Apostle John mentions another benefit. Let us continue to read **John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** What is the second benefit?

The second benefit of God's rescue mission for all those who believe is that they will be granted the gift of eternal *life*. Let us once again read the verse, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** The benefit of God's rescue mission is not just about what we don't experience but what we do experience. What will those who believe in Christ experience? They will experience eternal life. But what it does not mean? The phrase "eternal life" does not simply mean living eternally. Every person who has ever lived will live *eternally*.

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Either they will live eternally in a state of blessedness or they will live eternally in a state of torment. Either way they will live eternally in a place called "heaven" or they will live eternally in a place called "hell." When John tells us that those who believe in Jesus will have eternal life he is not simply saying that they will live forever and ever. It has to be something more than that.

If it does not mean that those who believe in Jesus will simply live forever and ever then what does it mean? I wish I could give you a chapter and verse that definitively answers this question, but biblically this is somewhat difficult since the scriptures rather than defining it simply describe it. What appears to be the nearest approach to a definition is given in **John 17:1-3**, "**These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee." (2) even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. (3)"And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."**

Though this appears to be approaching a definition it is still at its very core simply a description. It is very much like people today saying, "Happiness is a warm puppy." Or happiness is a good nights sleep. Jesus in John 17:1-3 is simply saying eternal life is knowing God and having fellowship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. But we could also say that eternal life is many other things as well.

Does this mean that we cannot define eternal life? No! It simply means that rather than pointing to a chapter and verse in order to define eternal life we must rather consider everything the scriptures tell us about eternal life and other things related to eternal life in order to come up with a definition.

So let us go back to the original question? What is the meaning of the phrase "eternal life?" Eternal life comprises all the wonderful things that come to us as a result of our spiritual union with the life of Christ.

We could end the message here if we wanted to, but I would like to take this a step further, and emphasize one of those wonderful things that come to us as a result of our spiritual union with the life of Christ not in the hereafter but rather in the here and now.

One of the wonderful things that come to those who have been spiritually joined to Christ is the confident expectation that we will become *better* people (1 John 3:3). In fact when we come to Christ to receive the gift of eternal life the hope of becoming a better person is fixed on us.

Listen to **1 John 3:1-3**, "**See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure."**

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Certainly I did not come to Christ to remain the same. And I haven't. I can look back over the course of my Christian life and I can see changes. Am I satisfied with the positive changes that I have seen in my life? No, I am not satisfied. I cannot be satisfied until I am like Christ. And because of this I will continue to press forward and I will continue to see positive changes in my life. This is my confident expectation

We were not joined to Christ to *remain* as we were (1 Thessalonians 5:24; Philippians 2:13). What does **1 Thessalonians 5:24** tell us? "**Faithful is He that calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.**" What does **Philippians 2:13** tell us? "**For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work His good pleasure.**" God is the very dynamic of all that He demands. The reason I have this confident expectation of becoming a better person is because God is going to make me a better person. But how is He going to do this?

God is going to do this through His Son. Hopefully we understand that Christ did not die simply that we might be saved from a bad conscience, or even to remove the stain of past failure, but to "clear the decks" for divine action (Rom. 5:10). Let me read for you **Romans 5:10 "For if while 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."**

How much can Jesus do in and through us? Christ in matters pertaining to His will and work is only limited by the measure of our availability (Colossians 2:9-10). **Colossians 2:9-10** tells us that "**in Him (Christ) dwells all the fullness of Deity in bodily form (10) and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.**"

But how do we make ourselves available to Christ so that He can do the work that He has come to do in and through our lives? Christ will accomplish His work in and through us as we walk by faith (Romans 1:17). What does **Romans 1:17** tell us? "**The just shall live by faith.**"

How stupid it would be to be given a car with a powerful engine under the hood, and then to spend the rest of our lives pushing it! Thwarted and exhausted some professing Christians might be tempted to discard it as a useless thing! But this would be a huge mistake. The problem is not with the car but with those professing Christians who would fail to understand how they could take advantage of what they had been given.

When we were born again by grace through faith God in a sense gave us a car with a powerful engine underneath our hood. That car with the powerful engine under the hood is nothing less than the resurrected life of God the Son who indwells us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

If we truly understand this and if we truly believe this, what will we do? We will stop trying to push this car up the hill or in other words we will stop trying to live the Christian life in our strength. Rather we will by faith get into the car and expose every hill of circumstance, every hill of opportunity, every hill of temptation, every hill of perplexity – no matter how threatening, to the divine energy that is unfailingly available for us in Christ. And will we climb those hills? And the answer is absolutely!

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Let me read to you the words of Major Ian Thomas "To be in Christ - that is redemption; but for Christ to be in you – that is sanctification! To be in Christ – that makes you fit for heaven; but for Christ to be in you – that makes you fit for earth! To be in Christ – that changes your destination; but for Christ to be in you – that changes your destiny! The one makes heaven your home – the other makes this world His workshop."

Just recently Lynn and I flew up to Fairbanks to spend time with our daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren. In the process of doing this it meant that Lynn and I had to surrender ourselves to the law of aero-dynamics. If we did not do this we would never have gotten off the ground.

We could have gone to airport. We could have looked at the airplane that we were scheduled to fly on. We could have touched the airplane. We could have said all kinds of wonderful things about the airplane but the fact of the matter is this: We would never have gotten off the ground if we had not by faith boarded the plane and trusted engines of the plane to supply sufficient thrust for that plane to overcome the force of the gravity trying to keep that plane on the ground.

Let me ask you a question. Are you presently airborne? Or are you still stuck on the ground. Hopefully you are not stuck on the ground but if you are what will you need to do to get airborne?

In order to get airborne or in other words in order to unleash by faith the power of the indwelling Christ we must first of all have a settled conviction about what we believe God's will is for our lives. We must be looking at our lives not in terms of our will but in terms of His will. This of course means that we will need to spend time in God's word. It is time spent in God's word that produces in us a desire to leave the place that we are to go to a better place.

But there is more to becoming airborne and unleashing the power of the resurrected living Christ in and through our lives than simply having a settled conviction about what God's will is for our lives. There is something more than having the desire to leave the place that we are to go to a better place. This desire might get us to the airport but it will not get us airborne. There is something else? So what is this next thing?

In order to unleash by faith the power of the indwelling Christ to do His will we must then present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).

If we are going to get airborne we must not only want to travel to a different place or in other words to a better place we must get ourselves on the airplane and we do this by confessing our sin. Not just a sin or a few sins but every sin. We must turn our lives fully and completely over to Christ. We must become clay in the potter's hands. We can't hold anything back. We must do exactly what Romans 12:1 teaches us to do. We must present our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God as our spiritual act of worship.

If we do this will we become airborne? And the answer is absolutely, and when we become airborne which every true disciple of Christ will eventually do because of God's work in us we know that we will make steady, even at times spectacular progress toward our destination. And for the children of God this is exhilarating. This is what makes life worth living.

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What do we call this? I call this eternal life. Eternal life can be described in many different ways but one of the ways that it can be defined is the confident expectation that we will become *better* people (1 John 3:3). This is certainly one of the wonderful things that we are blessed with in the here and now because of our spiritual union with Christ by grace through faith.

CONCLUSION

There are many professing Christians that seem to have no forward gears. They don't seem to be making any progress toward holiness but then there are others who are. How do we explain this? It could be that these so-called professing Christians are not Christians at all or it might be that they yet have not yet come to the place where they know how to take advantage of all the wonderful resources that have come to them as a result of their spiritual union with the life of Christ.

If you are here this weekend and you seem to have parked yourself in a rest stop on your way to becoming more like Christ, this weekend is a good time to renew your journey. All you have to do is get back into the word and meditate on it day and night. This will get you to the airport. Then all you have to do is board the airplane. You do this by presenting your body as a living sacrifice. And if we do these things what will happen? Christ will take you where you will need to go. God in Christ Jesus has supplied us with all the *resources* necessary to work out His will in our lives as we walk by faith.