

SALVATION - HOW AND WHY

John 3:16

Intro: For the next several Sunday nights I would like to speak on some of the great Gospel texts of the Bible. The Gospel, as most of us know, is that part of the Scriptures which deals particularly with salvation. In this sense it is good news.

My primary purpose is not that people may be saved by hearing these messages. If that were my purpose, I would seek some other audience since most of you are believers.

No - my primary purpose is that we as believers may become more familiar with this Gospel which has brought about the transformation of our lives. If some come, or are here, who do not know the Lord and are saved as a result of hearing the Gospel, this will be wonderful. But I still want it to be known that I am primarily concerned about the believer. In this I am on good, Biblical ground. Cf. Romans, Galatians, Colossians, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and others--ALL WITH A HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE GOSPEL, AND ALL WRITTEN TO BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

There is never a person who receives Christ as his Saviour who does not learn more about the Gospel after he was saved than he knew before. In fact, a person cannot be thoroughly grounded in Christian living who is not grounded in the Gospel.

My first text is John 3:16. Probably every one here knows it by heart. Perhaps you feel that you know all about it. I am sure that you do know the major points. But let us look at it closely tonight, examining it point by point, to see if there is some facet of this wonderful verse that may have escaped us before.

It deals with the HOW and WHY of SALVATION.

Some believe that John is quoting our Lord from v. 10 down through v. 15, and that vv. 16-21 are John's words where he is re-stating and reemphasizing what he had heard the Lord Jesus teach.

Others feel that vv. 10-21 are all to be considered as a direct quotation from our Lord. Personally I am inclined toward this latter view, possibly because of the "After these things" in v. 22.

But, whatever view you hold, the message remains the same.

Another point to note is: the message of the first 21 verses of John 3 was directed toward one man, Nicodemus, "a ruler of the Jews," a man who by reason of his training and his work would have known much of the Scriptures, but who had somehow missed this most vital of all messages to be found in the Word of God. Until you and I know from personal experience the message of John 3, there is not much in the rest of the Bible that is going to do us a great deal of good.

So it is stated here in the simplest way possible.

Nicodemus was a man who would have been acquainted with human needs, and he must have been conscious of some personal needs in his own heart for him to seek out Jesus Christ as he did.

How does God meet man's need? First -

I. In dealing with the HOW of SALVATION there is:

A. THE DIVINE SIDE.

You will never understand salvation unless you know God's side as well as man's. In fact, what we say about man's side does not really make sense until we see God's side.

Our Lord wanted Nicodemus to know that salvation rests on two unalterable truths! The first of these is

1. The love of God for the whole world. "For God so loved the world." This is the starting point. Let us look at this for a moment.
  - a. "God" - This is the title for Deity which brings together everything that you would think of when you think of Deity, but especially the fact that He is the Creator, the Ruler, the Only absolutely supreme in the universe. Nicodemus knew the term well.
  - b. "The world" - looking at the object. Nicodemus would immediately be impressed by the fact that this word included more than Jews. It included all men, every inhabitant of the earth, the whole human race. Salvation might be of the Jews (John 4:22), but it was not just for the Jews.

And think for a moment what kind of a world it was then, and what it is like today-- the sin, the unhappiness, the selfishness, the tragedy, the unrest--and one could go on and on. You really don't need the Bible to show you what the world is (you can see that for yourself); you need the Bible to tell you why the world is the way it is!

How different the world is from God, and yet look at the word that links "God" and "the world" -

- c. "Loved" - Can it be possible? That is way the verse reads. And John even starts the verse (in the Gk) with the word "so" to express the intensity of that love.

But there are two other things about this love that I want to point out to you.

- 1) The tense of the verb: the aorist. This means that the verse has reference to the summation of God's attitude toward man when viewed in all of its entirety.

It is as though someone had asked for a single word which would describe the most prominent thing about God's attitude toward man from the very beginning of time. It is LOVE!

God did not begin to love the world when Jesus Christ came; He has always loved the world.

But what do you mean by love--the world's interpretation of this word?

- 2) The definition: It means to take such pleasure in a thing, to prize it above all other things to such an extent that one is unwilling to abandon it or to do without it.

Here, in a word, you have the ultimate reason for your salvation and mine: the amazing, the unique, love of God.

Knowing what you do about yourself, how can it help but amaze you that this would be GOD'S attitude toward you and all men--the outstanding feature of His attitude from all eternity.

Cf. Jer. 31:3, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

But, you say, how do you know God loves the world? Let us look at the second part of the divine side.

2. God's gift. "He gave His only begotten Son."

Cf. Rom. 5:8.

First of all, let us look at

a. The verb: "gave."

- 1) The tense again indicates that this is a gift which finds its origin in eternity past, as Peter says in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19, "But with the precious blood . . . who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world . . ."
- 2) Bishop Westcott says that the word "gave" brings out the idea of sacrifice, an offering. It is used of Christ's part in Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 2:6.
- 3) Thayer points out that this word is used of Saul (the king) in Acts 13:21 when God gave him to Israel to care for their interests. So, Jesus Christ was given by the Father to meet our needs.

b. The gift: "His only begotten Son."  
God has many children in His family, but He only has one Son like Jesus Christ.  
Cf. Gen. 22:2.

Surely this expresses the depth of God's love!

He gave His Son on a cross, as a sacrifice, to die for the sins of men. The illustration is in John 3:14, 15.

But why should Jesus Christ do this? Now we come to

#### B. THE HUMAN SIDE.

Having seen the divine side, we can now understand the human side.

Man's condition in sin was so hopeless that he could do nothing to meet his own need--NOTHING!

Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ came to do everything that was necessary to meet his need.

Does this mean that the whole world then is saved? Absolutely not!

God's love cannot be satisfied without a return of our love. How do we do this?

"That whosoever believeth in Him," that is, in Christ.

Notice we have passed now from the world in the first part to, lit., everyone who believes--the individual!

What does it mean to believe?

In short, it means that, understanding the first part of this verse, and accepting it as true, I trust Jesus Christ to be my Saviour, forever rejecting any other plan to get myself to heaven or into God's favor.

"I need no other argument,  
I need no other plea.  
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died  
for me."

But this leads us to our final point:

#### II. The WHY of SALVATION. Why believe in Jesus Christ?

Because the last part of our verse makes it very clear

that, regarding human destiny, there are only two ways: perishing, or having eternal life.

What does it mean to perish?

Listen to Rev. 20:10 - "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

In Rev. 20:15 is added, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

What do you have to do to perish? Nothing. Read John 3:18.

The whole world would have gone to hell if Jesus Christ had not come, and every person tonight who has not received Jesus Christ as his Saviour is on his way to hell in spite of the fact that Christ has come!

What does the world tonight? Not just Christ, but to believe in Christ.

What happens when anyone believes in Christ, trusts Him to save them?

IMMEDIATELY (not when they die, and not just when Christ comes), but IMMEDIATELY THAT PERSON RECEIVES ETERNAL LIFE.

This is where true Christian life begins. He believes, and he continues to believe, and he has eternal life and he continues to have it, manifesting it and enjoying it in daily experience!

Concl: How simple! I don't have eternal life. I certainly don't deserve it. And I can't ever work enough to merit it (if you have tried this, you know). But I can have eternal life the moment I trust Jesus Christ as my Saviour because of what He did to take away my sins.

How full of praise our hearts should be that God loved us, and that Christ died to meet our need so that salvation could be brought within reach of everyone---Jew or Gentile, the whole world!

\* 242