

John 3:16

Introduction:

- I. It was once said that Peter Bales, a celebrated calligrapher in the days of Queen Elizabeth, wrote the whole Bible so that it could be contained in a common walnut. Well, that is something I'd have to see in order to believe, but it is true that sometimes you can find great sayings in small places. One doesn't necessarily have to write an entire book in order to articulate an excellent thought. Sometimes enormous insight can be found in short statements. Here are some examples:

Dale Carnegie:

"Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Abraham Lincoln:

I'm a slow walker, but I never walk back.

- II. Yes, great things can sometimes be said in few words. Never was this more true than when Jesus spoke. He often cradled insightful and perceptive sayings in but a few words. Perhaps the greatest example of this is found in what might be the most popular passage in the Bible.

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.

In this lesson I want to take a close look at this passage and in doing so I we want to discuss four things found in the text: design, duty, danger and destiny. Let's take a look at it.

Lesson:

I. The Design: God's Gracious Giving

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.

This is the heart of the passage and it sets forth a synopsis of the God's plan of salvation. The redemption of mankind begins and ends with the love of God. It was God's great love that moved and motivated Him to give His only begotten Son.

1 John 4:10

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Now, what this suggests to us is that God loved, not because of anything that man did, but because of His very nature. John once said that God is love. Love, in other words, is the essence of God's being. So then, God's giving rose up out of that very essence. And there are two things in our text that highlight this love of God.

A. The aim of His love.

God aimed His love at the world. Why does this highlight the love of God? It is because the world that God loved was not very lovable. It was a world that had pretty much the same cast of characters that it has now. It was a world made up of people who lived in sin and were absorbed with self, but still God gave. It was a world that stumbled in darkness and staggered in doubt, but still God gave. It was a world that was corrupt and crooked, deceitful and dishonest, but still God gave. It was a world, ladies and gentlemen, filled with covenant-breakers and God-haters, with murderous aims and maliciousness ambitions, but still God gave. Doesn't this tell us volumes about the love of God? O how we are loved by God and that will never change because it has to do with God not us.

Illus:

One day Charles Spurgeon was walking through the countryside with a friend. As they strolled along, Spurgeon noticed a barn with a weather vane on its roof. At the top of the vane were these words: GOD IS LOVE. Spurgeon remarked to his companion that he thought this was a rather inappropriate place for such a message. "Weather vanes are changeable," he said, "but God's love is constant."

His friend said, "I don't agree with you about those words, Charles." "You misunderstood the meaning. That sign is indicating that regardless of which way the wind blows, God is love."

Source unknown

This is exactly right, isn't it? Listen to me: God's love is a perpetual power and permanent presence in our lives and it doesn't matter which way the wind is blowing. How do we know? We know it because God so loved the world that he gave.

B. The action of His love.

Jesus said that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. One of the lessons we learn from this great text is that love is more than just an emotional feeling. Real love always acts and it

always acts in the best interest of whatever is loved. So then, God loved the world and so He acted. In this case the act was the act of giving. And what He gave demonstrated a matchless, inimitable love which has never been duplicated, nor could it ever be. God, ladies and gentlemen, gave his Son. Could there ever be a greater sacrifice for a father than the giving up of his son for the advancement of his enemies? Someone said, "Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac." Yes, but Abraham was willing to make such a sacrifice for God. Was Abraham's sacrifice impressive? Of course it was and a thousand sermons have been preached about it. But God sacrificed His Son, not for a friend, nor for a being of infinite love, but for His enemies **(Rom. 5:6-8)**. Doesn't this truth enhance the sacrifice that God made for us? And let's not forget that this Son that God sacrificed was not one son of many; it was God's *only begotten Son*. That too make a difference. The NIV says that God "*gave His one and only Son.*" Let me tell you ladies and gentlemen, it's hard to lose your one and only of anything. It would be devastating for me to lose Janice. Why? She's my one and only. It might be different if I had three wives, but I only have one (e.g. of Michael Johnson giving up one of many gold medals because of the steroid use of a teammate on the relay team). Jesus was God's one and only and yet God was willing to make the sacrifice. This was God's design to save mankind from the horrible consequences of sin and we should, no, we must thank God for it every day.

II. The Duty: A Full & Far-Reaching Faith.

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.

So then, God gave but that doesn't mean that everyone in the world is going to be saved. Man must meet the duty of faith in order to take advantage of God's great sacrifice. Let me ask you: do you believe in Jesus? Now, there are many people who will answer that question in the affirmative but they really don't know what it means to believe in Jesus. You see, ladies and gentlemen, to believe in Jesus involves more than just obtaining a mere knowledge of His existence. Yes, we must believe that He exists, but is this not a self-evident truth? Surely true faith in Jesus goes deeper than that. I would suggest to you that the belief that Jesus is referring to in this passage is comprehensive in nature and involves everything that the Bible says about Jesus.

To believe in Jesus is to acknowledge that he is morally perfect and impeccably pure. Do you believe in Jesus? To believe in Jesus is to acknowledge that he is divine in nature and supreme in power. Do you believe in Jesus? To believe in Jesus is to acknowledge that he is wiser than the greatest scholar and more knowledgeable than the most intelligent

teacher; it is to realize that he has more authority than any king, more power than any potentate, and more clout than any commander and chief. Do you believe in Jesus? To believe in Jesus is to acknowledge that his love is limitless, His goodness is genuine and His integrity is intact. The question is, “do you believe in Jesus?”

You say “yes, I believe in Jesus.” Well let me tell you something else about believing in Jesus—it includes a display and demonstration of obedience.

John 3:36

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. NASB

You see, if you don't obey Christ, you really don't believe in Him. How can you say that Jesus is the King of kings and then not do what He tells you to do? If you don't obey Christ, you must not really believe that He is the Son of God. If you don't follow the words of Jesus you must not really believe that His commands carry any weight. You see when you disobey Jesus you are in reality rejecting, repudiating and renouncing him by your actions, regardless of what you say with your lips. This is why Jesus once asked, “*Why do you call me Lord and do not the things that I say?*” Let me ask you again: do you believe in Jesus.

If you believe in Jesus, you will repent of your sins. Why? Jesus tells you to.

Luke 13:3

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

If you believe in Jesus, you will confess Him before men. Why? Jesus tells you to.

Matt 10:32

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

If you believe in Jesus you will be baptized. Why? Jesus tells you to.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

But let me tell you something else: if you believe in Jesus you will live right after you are baptized into Christ. Listen to me: If you believe in Jesus you will attend the assembling of the saints. Why? That is a part of living right. If you believe in Jesus, you will shun sin and turn away from transgression. Why? That is a part of living right. If you believe in Jesus you will control your tongue and have power over your person. Why? That is a part of living right and living right is a part of the comprehensive faith of Jn. 3:16. Listen to

me: believing in Jesus means that you understand that you have been bought with a price and so you are not your own but now you belong to someone else. Now you belong to Jesus and so you do what He says, not simply want you want.

Gal 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

So then, all that Jesus commands is involved in the believing of Jn. 3:16. The duty of man set forth in the great text is a full and far-reaching faith that includes among other things the display and demonstration of obedience.

III. The Danger: The Permanent Position of the Perishing.

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.

If those who believe will not perish, what is going to happen to those who refuse to believe? The obvious answer is that they will perish. Now, let's be sure that we understand what's involved in this perishing. I would suggest to you that it involves everything that the Bible says is going to happen to those who die in unbelief.

A. It involves experiencing the wrath of God (Jn. 3:36).

John 3:36

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. NASB

Without even considering the specific demonstration of God's wrath, the mere mention of it should instill fear into our hearts. Why? We are talking about a God who had the power to create our universe by the command of His Word. We are talking about a God who is so infinitely strong that our finite minds can't begin to comprehend His strength.

Eph 3:20

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

We are talking about a God who can lengthen a day or shorten a night just because He wants to. We are talking about a God who can raise

nations up and bring nations down according to His own good pleasure. Let me tell you when you provoke the wrath of being like that, you should know that you are in trouble. The wrath of God is no joke, neither is it a fabrication of man's imagination. God's wrath, ladies and gentlemen, is real.

Rev 14:10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...

Rom 2:5

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Rom 2:8-9

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

B. It involves an eternal separation from God (2 Thess. 1:9)

2 Thess 1:9

They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power. NIV

To be separated from God is to be separated from everything that is good about God and every good thing that comes from God. When you are separated from God there is no longer any such thing as compassion. There is no longer any such thing as forgiveness. There is no longer any such thing as grace. There is no longer any such thing as love. There is no longer any such thing as mercy. There is no longer any such thing as second chances and new beginnings. All of these things are over for the one who perishes because they all come from God, but the one who perishes is shut out from the presence of God.

C. It involves an unending torment.

Some think the word *perish* indicates a ceasing to exist, but it doesn't. How do I know? I know because this same word is used several times when a ceasing to exist is clearly not under consideration (**Lk. 15:4, 6, 8-9, 17, 24, 32**). What does this word *perish* mean. Vine puts it in very simple fashion:

PERISH

Signifies "to destroy utterly"; in middle voice, "to perish." The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of wellbeing (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

Listen, if you perish in eternity, you will find yourself in a situation that is void of all wellbeing. There won't be anything good about your existence at all. There won't be any happiness or hope. There won't be any comfort or consolation. There won't be any joy or jubilation. There will only be sadness and sorrow and eternal torment. Listen to the rest of Rev. 14:10).

Rev 14:10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

Matt 25:41

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Luke 16:28

For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

This is the danger that every single person who doesn't believe in Jesus faces. But God gave His Son so that you would not have to be in such a situation. Why not take advantage of the marvelous and matchless love of God and believe and obey Jesus before it is too late.

IV. The Destiny: The Elation of Everlasting Life.

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.

This is the destiny of every saint that dies in the Lord. Notice the desire that man has for this destiny.

Mark 10:17

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Man runs after eternal life. Why? Everyone wants to live forever. Well listen to me: in Christ this is a reality. Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha?

John 11:25-26

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Believe thou this?

Do you believe it? Every Christian ought to believe it. This is our desire and confident expectation. This is why we can overcome every hurt and every heartache. This is why we can endure every villain and every vexation. This is why we can triumph over every difficulty and every dilemma. It is because we have the hope of eternal life, and we have that hope because the Bible is clear about it. I don't have time to look at all the passages that promise eternal life to the faithful child of God, but let's look at a few shall we. Listen:

John 6:54

Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 10:27-28

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Rom 2:7

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:

1 Tim 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

1 John 2:25

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

And like the Bible tells us what it means to perish, it tells us what it means to have eternal life. It means to live in the presence of God and to see Him face to face (**Rev. 22:4**). It means to live in a place where there is no sun because heaven will be lit by the glory of God and the light of the Lamb (**Rev. 21:23**). Eternal life means being in a place where there will be no sin (**Rev. 21:27**). In fact, heaven will be a place of no more: no more tears and no more death. There will be no more sorrow and no more crying because there will be no more pain (**Rev. 21:4**). That's the everlasting life that Jesus is talking about in Jn. 3:16. That is the life that is available to every saint. That, ladies and gentlemen, is the destiny of everyone who truly believes for Jesus said they will not perish but have everlasting life.

Conclusion:

Let me conclude by saying to you that this is an invitation to everyone who has reached the age of accountability. No one who wants eternal life enough to believe in and obey Jesus Christ will be turned away or left behind.

On September 3, 1878, a dreadful accident happened when a steamer named the Princess Alice was struck by the Bywell Castle, a coal steamer that weight over 900 tons. The Princess Alice sunk within four minutes and more than seven hundred people that day found a watery grave. Among the brave efforts that were made on that occasion to save the drowning people, one of the noblest was made by a man who was in charge of a small boat at some distance from the scene of the collision. Rowing with all his might into the midst of the struggling passengers, he pulled several of them one after another into his little boat. But when his boat was full and now in danger of sinking, he prepared to row away. When he saw the white, upturned faces of many others, and heard their cries, "Oh, save me, sir!" "Don't leave me, sir!" it is said that in agony he threw up his arms and cried, "O God, that I had a bigger boat! O God, that I had a bigger boat!" His heart was large enough to save all who were perishing, but his boat was too small; his power was limited. It is not so with Christ. He is the Lifeboat of perishing humanity, and in Him there is room for the whole race, for "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (*R. Brewin.*)

Jesus can save you, but you must let him pull you in by believing that he is the Savior of the world. Will you believe and accept Jesus today? Will you obey the gospel of Christ? Do it now before you perish!