

The Love of God
Dr. J.B. Buffington
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I thought about the message to preach for our civil servants. The fire department is here. I thought about preaching my sermon on church arson, but I did not think that would be too good. Then, I got another one on the church fire department—Christians. They put out every fire you try to kindle, and there are some fires that need to be put out. That is the church arson. I thought about Daniel, the cabinet counselor. But, I did not want to take advantage of these folks. I wanted to be a blessing and a help them. I did not want to take advantage of them. That is not Christian, and that is not ethical. I really had difficulty deciding what to preach, but I do not think you will have difficulty with this text.

Open your Bibles to John 3. Let us talk about the Love of God. John 3:14-21: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Our Father, in Jesus' name, as we seek to preach a message that is too great for us—any message is too great—but, Lord, we ask this morning that the Holy Spirit may open our hearts and our minds. Lord, may we bask in the wonderful redemptive story of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Speak to our hearts; encourage us; challenge us. For those who do not know Thee, may this be the day when they trust You as personal Savior. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

I want to use primarily John 3:16—the Love of God. One of the most misused words in America is the word *love*. When most people hear about love, they are thinking about moon beams and emotions, but the Bible is not talking about that when He talks about love. I turned to the dictionary. Listen to what it has to say. It is all about feeling. Young people, love is a whole lot more than feeling. The feeling happens to be the dessert. Love is action. Sometimes feeling is there, and sometimes it is not. Love, regardless of feeling, operates. Listen to the dictionary meaning: *fond or tender feeling; warm liking; affection; strong or passionate affection for a person of the opposite sex; a kindly feeling or benevolence of God for His creatures; the reverent devotion to them, to God, or the kindly affection they should have for each other.* That is what they call *love*. That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about a word that has nothing to do with the emotions. It has to do with the feet. It has to do with the hands. It has to do with action. In this world of hate, war, crime, violence, and broken dreams, we surely need to come back to get a glimpse of the love of God. You cannot operate properly without a sense of being loved. Children that are brought up in homes without a consciousness of the love of mom and dad will be warped children for life. They need a whole lot of TLC—tender loving care. That is the solution for many things and many problems. The world needs love. What are we talking about? Well, we turn to Hollywood and say, “No, that is not love. That is something else.” What is love? We open the Word of God. The Bible talks about *God so loved the world*. When we try to describe it, God used a little word: *so loved the world*. You cannot describe it. You have to behold it. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:* 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.* Long before we ever thought about loving God, God loved us. Long before God created the heavens and the earth, God loved us. Jeremiah said, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.* God had mankind upon His heart before He ever spun the Milky Way into existence. That is traced throughout all the Word of God—the Love of God.

Let us look briefly this morning—that word *briefly* is a bad word with me—at the love of God, the Person

of the giver—God the Father, the eternal God—God Who made the heavens and the earth. The Scripture does not set out to try to prove God. The Bible says: *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* There is ample evidence everywhere for anybody to be convinced that God is a vivid God. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* In every language, in every tribe, in every position, in every culture on the face of this globe every twenty-four hours, the Bible says: *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.* Nobody on the face of this globe is beyond the revelation of the glory of God. This is the one that gave His Son. David the little shepherd boy, as he stood out and watched the starlit skies, had this to say, *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* God, the eternal God, made the universe. The universe cannot contain Him. He fills the universe. There is no place in this universe where God is not. He is there. He is omnipresent. The universe cannot contain Him. He made it. He upholds it by the word of His power. We think we are standing on something stable. Why, this is just like a golf ball out in the infinite spaces trilling around. Who is holding it up? The same One that put it there—God. This is a God that the Scripture speaks of that He *gave his only begotten son.* Isaiah thought about the magnitude of God in the fortieth chapter. He said: *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? He said: Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.* That God would think upon me! Next to my salvation experience was the fact that God had something for me to do in life. I am just a little country boy that God took knowledge of and had a plan and purpose for my life. He has a plan and purpose for your life. There is nobody that is lost in the knowledge of God today. He names the stars. He calls them all by name (Psalm 147). He knows you personally. He knows you by name. You are not lost in the crowd. You cannot hide in the crowd. God knows you. This is a God of infinite wisdom of power and might. *God so loved the world.* He is not a tyrant. He does not arbitrarily govern the world. He governs the world in righteousness. He governs the world in justice. Let me tell you that He is in control today. There is a crisis in Israel's life in Isaiah 6. This was the only godly king they had had in several kingdoms. *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: God rules and reigns today. He is on the throne today. He does not have ulcers today. The world is in His hands. He is sovereign, and He is still ruling and reigning on this earth. He is no tyrant. He is love. God is love. He is the fountain of all blessings. James 1:17: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* This is a God that the Scripture says: *God so loved the world.* That is the giver.

Let us consider the cause and motive of His giving. He gave not from obligation. He gave not from duty. He gave out of His goodness—pure, unadulterated goodness, His Own inherent goodness. He takes delight in giving. The Scripture teaches us that He taught that: *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* When Adam sinned, He was on the receiving end the rest of his life. Unless God does something for us, we think about what is in it for me, coming toward us. God's love is all going out. *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* This love, God's love, is love beyond human comprehension. You cannot comprehend it. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* The Bible teaches that Jesus said: *Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.* He is not talking about emotion again. He is talking about a choice of the will. Love your enemies. Christ loved the ones that crucified Him. He prayed: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Parents, never tell your child, "Hey, if you do not behave, God will not love you." That does not happen to be so. God's love is not dependent upon whether I respond in love to Him. He has

already responded in love to me before I ever was born. He sent the Son of God to die in my place instead—the Love of God. I had a member in my church. My congregation has heard it several times through the years. I have been here twenty-five years, and I assure you they have heard it several times. I had a music director in a little church that I pastored in the Chattanooga Valley in North Georgia. This man had a heartbreak. His wife left him. She left him. He had a broken leg, and she left him with the children. She left a note, “Don’t come after me.” This is a man that was saved. I caught a little, tiny glimpse of this matter of love that is beyond human comprehension. She left a note, “Don’t come after me.” His leg was in a cast. He said, “Pastor, would you drive me to Philadelphia?” He said, “I would like to go see if I can get my wife to come back home.” I said, “I surely will.” We loaded him into the car and headed out for Philadelphia. We got to Philadelphia and pulled up in the yard where she was staying. She came out of the house with her eyes blazing, angry. “What did you come after me for?” On the way, we had stopped and wired some flowers ahead. He said, “I came after you because I love you.” She said, “If you love me, give me your keys. I want to drive down the street to see my boyfriend.” That was a sword in his heart. He took her downtown Philadelphia that night and bought her a mink coat and tried to show his expression. In the middle of the night, the phone rang; his father had died. We went back to North Georgia without his wife. Three months later, a phone call came. She wanted to come home now. She was in trouble. She was with child out of wedlock. I loaded the same man in the car and went back. We picked her up and brought her home. She heckled him all the way home. There was no repentance. There was no desire for reconciliation. All she was wanting was a refuge for a little while so that she could go back into the world. He took her in. He built her a new brick house. She left him again. He raised the boy. I have seen him sit in church with that little boy who did not belong to him with a glow on his face of the love of God. He led my singing. He sang, “No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus” and “Jesus is All the World to Me.” He told me, “It does not make any difference what she has done. I still love her.” I stood in amazement. I do not know whether I could come up to that sort of love. I caught a little, tiny segment. She never came back. He put that boy in business, the little boy that was not his own. He raised him to be a godly man. That is a little, tiny picture of the love of God. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* It is a love that is beyond human comprehension. It is a love that changes vile men to children of God. It is a love that will do something for you. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us . . .* We have a wrong attitude toward the love of God. The love of God is a holy love. It is not a sentimental love. It is not the love of Santa Clause. It is the love of a holy God that loves His creatures and does a work in their hearts and lives when He saves them that makes them love righteousness. In 1 Corinthians 6, there is a passage of Scripture that begins to name all of the various forms of iniquity and sin. It says: *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters . . .* and so on . . . *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* When that love comes into our hearts and lives, He transforms us. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* I know when I got saved. I know from that day to this day that I am a different person. I am a different person by reformation. I tried that. My name was on a church role. Nothing had ever happened to me. I had been baptized, and nothing had ever happened to me. I went to church. I heard nothing. I felt nothing. I enjoyed nothing. I got nothing. I have no memories of my past church life previous to my conversion experience. I want to tell you that I have a whole lot of memories since then. He made a new creature out of me. He changed my vocabulary. He changed my friends. He changed my desires. He changed my goals. Why? He did that. I did not do that. The Christian life is not a do-it-yourself job. Roll up your sleeves and grit your teeth and do that which you do not want to do. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* He came to Mary Magdalene and saved her. The devils departed out of her heart life, and she lived a godly life. He came to the demoniac of Gadara. Nobody could chain him. He was wild and unmanageable. He lived in the cemeteries. He was nude. He cut himself, and he cried day and night. Jesus came and spoke peace to his heart. You find him later sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ clothed and in his right mind. That is the power of the love of God. I had a young lady come into my office several years ago. She sat in my office and unburdened her heart. I had never

seen the lady before, but she was a relative of one of our members. She had done everything that there was to do. She sat there in agony. When she got through, she said, "Tell me God loves me." I was glad to open the Word of God and say, *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*. I am glad to say that God said, *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow . . .* That day, she knelt and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to come into her heart and life. When she did, I did not intrude. I sat very quietly. I heard a little voice say, "You did, Lord. You did." In the next ten or fifteen minutes, quietly that lady who had done everything in the world worshipped the Lord in the sweetness and quietness. I did not dare intrude as I sat there and heard her declare her devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ Who had come in and washed her from her sins. When God's Son comes into the heart and life, it is love that changes vile men and women into children of God. It changes their character. I could go down the line and name lists of places and things that people have done and what God did for them. Our hymn that we so much sing, "Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound," was written by John Newton. He was an infidel, libertine, slave of a slave owner. He had hit the bottom, and God saved him. He wrote that song, "Amazing Grace," and became a mighty power for God. Oswald Chambers, a Scottish preacher who got converted in the middle of his ministry, made this statement, "I never saw transformed lives until I preached the cross not morality." You can preach morality, and lives will be unchanged. That is reformation. But, you preach Christ, and that is regeneration. There is life where there was death. There is light where there was darkness. There is liberty where there was slavery—the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is love that never fails. Hebrews 13:5: *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*. That is a faithful God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God does not lie. God does not forsake us. Sometimes, we feel forsaken. Sometimes, their circumstances say, "God does not care." God, Who cannot lie, said, *I will never leave thee . . . never under any circumstances leave you in the lurch or let you down. I will never leave thee . . .* He has never left me. He has never let me down. He stood with me in sickness. He stood beside me in darkness. He stood beside me in trials. He stood beside me when I took a stand in the community, and everybody turned against me. I stood alone. He stood by me. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*. Paul came to the end of his life. He said, *all men forsook me . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me . . .* The Lord is One that stands by you. He will never fail you. He will never let you go. He will never turn His back on you. He will never cast you out. . . . *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*. A man by the name of George Matheson wrote a hymn, "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go." George Matheson was engaged to be married. He discovered that he was going blind. The doctor said that it would be just a matter of time until he was blind. He went to his beloved fiancée to tell her the story, to break the news to her. He expected her to say, "Well, I love you anyway." That is not the message he got from her. He told her that. She said, "Well, I do not want to be married to a blind fellow." She broke her engagement. George Matheson wrote that song, "Oh love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul on Thee. I give Thee back the life I owe that in its ocean depths may flow fuller richer me"—"Love That Will Not Let Me Go." Lieutenant McClary came back from the war. His jaw was shot off, one eye out, and hands mangled from Vietnam. He went through many operations. Finally, his beloved bride, his wife, came to see him. She made out like nothing was wrong. She loved him. But, he named many people in that ward. Their mates came in. Their wives saw them. When they saw them, they walked out never more to return. That is conditional love. God loves us unconditionally. It is a love that will not let me go — all circumstances, all times, and all places. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*. Then, it is a love that constrains. 2 Corinthians 5:14: *For the love of Christ constraineth us . . .* I was in a meeting for preachers. Judge Clifton Kelly, a personal friend of mine, was speaking. This was the first time I had heard of him. He was speaking to preachers on how preachers could help law enforcement curb crime. I said, "Man, I had never heard that before." Judge Kelly said every thing under the sun about curbing crime. Then, Judge Kelly said, "Men, there is no law passed that can make new creatures in Christ Jesus out of anybody. There is

no law that you can pass that makes people obedient to authority. There is no such law.” When Adam sinned, he was our representative. Everyone of us have been born lawless creatures ever since we have turned every one to his own way. The problem with society is selfishness. We want our own way. Love that constrains us and changes our life—what will it do for you? Will it make you a new creature? Yes, it will. It will change your life, and it will do something for your heart and life. Joseph was down in Egypt. Nobody knew about it. He was a young man in the prime of life. He was a man that had been treated badly. His brothers sold him into slavery. His father did not understand him. Now, he was alone, and he was suffering. The Bible said that the chains of iron entered into his soul. There he was. Potiphar’s wife came after him. “Well, everybody is doing it. Nobody will know. After all, I am a slave. After all, it will never get back. I will probably never see my parents again. I might as well live like the rest of the world.” No, no, no. There was something in his heart that said, *how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* There is something about the love of Christ that constrains us. . . . *because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* I want to tell you about when I got saved. I went through the air corp. I had spent three years. I had been overseas. I have seen men do everything in the world. There were opportunities of every kind of sin. It is there. God kept me my whole time. Why did God keep me? He did something in my heart. I do not want to sin against the cross. I do not want to sin against Calvary. I do not want to bring shame and dishonor to the Son of God Who died for me and rose again. I do not want to sin against grace. When we trust Christ as personal Savior, I think of the song, “Shall I Crucify Again.” I do not want to sin in the light of what Calvary has done for my heart and life. Love wraps a chain around the heart of the one that really gets saved. He goes back into society to live a life of godliness. Why? Because of the love of Christ—not lull, but the love of Christ constrains us.

Then, let us consider the gift of His only begotten Son. What did He do? He gave His only begotten Son. I have one son and four girls. I would give myself for my son or my girls, but I would surely have some time giving my son. When I was in high school, the war had just broke out as far as we were concerned. The National Guard was leaving Ocala, Florida. We were playing in the Ocala High School band. We went down there to see those fellows go off, the National Guard. The war clouds were gathering. I remember standing down there. I was laughing. Yes, I was laughing because I had never been a parent. The song that was played that day at the railroad tracks was a song that just really wrenched mom and dad’s heart. We were laughing about why we were asked to play that number, but I saw folks listen. Their son was just going off. They were not even going overseas. I saw mom and dad cry and weep. The war came. They sent their sons overseas, and they never came back. Life will never be the same for them again, a broken heart. God gave His Son, not to go overseas. But, God gave His Son to leave the Ivory Palaces and come into this world. Of all the angels, that God would give His Son. Angels worshipped Him. God so loved; He gave His Son. I repeat again. I would die for my son. I would die for my girls. It would be very difficult for me to give my son to die for my friend. But, God’s Son died for His enemies. They were not friends. We were not friends of His. He died for His enemies. Now, we misunderstand something else. When did He give His Son? Turn to 1 Peter 1:18. If you can get a hold of this, I want to tell you that the giving of God’s Son was not in a little town called Bethlehem for just a few hours that God gave His Son. No, God gave His Son from all eternity. I do not understand eternity. I do not understand God. He made me. He is my Creator. I read in 1 Peter 1:18-20: *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,* When did God give His Son? He gave His Son way back yonder in eternity. Hebrews 13 says, *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight . . .* Before God made man, God knew man would fall. It is not an afterthought with God. God determined to send His Son, the second Person of the Godhead, to die. He was selected before Adam and Eve were ever placed in the garden. Sometimes

folks are heroes at the spur of the moment. If they had time to do it over, they would not do it again. Some have moments of greatness with their past. Oftentimes, love turns to hate in human lives. Do you understand? I hope you get a hold of this. If God had not planned His Son to die, when Adam sinned, God would have sent him straight to hell the moment that he sinned. He would have had to because of His holiness. God the Son in eternity before the heavens were made, He is God's pre-foreordained Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. When Adam sinned, God the Son said, "I will make it good one day." All the lambs that were killed in the Old Testament, the blood of bulls and goats, never took away sin. They brought the little lamb, an innocent substitute, testifying that they deserved to die. . . . *without shedding of blood is no remission*. God the Son said, "I will make it good one day, Father. Forgive him." I wondered, did the angels, when they watched the world go into sin in Genesis when the whole world was filled with violence, say, "Do you still want to go to the cross and die?" "Yes." In Sodom and Gomorrah, "You still want to go to the cross and die?" "Yes." World War I, "And still die for them?" "Yes." World War II, "Yes." "In all of that, are you still going to die?" "Yes." God gave His Son not just as a spur of the moment two thousand ago. But, God gave His Son in His heart before the creation of the universe. That has always been in God's heart. It will always be in His heart. In Heaven, you will see Him with the nail prints in His hands. Revelation 4 talks about the prints in His hands. God will not allow His Own redeemed to forget the cost of the redemption of their souls. Jesus was foreordained before the foundation of the earth. That is when God gave Him. How would you like to wait in suspense? You knew an accident was going to happen; great suffering was going to come to your child. You wait a week. You wait a month. You wait a year and another year. You know it is in the distance. Another year goes by, then five, ten, fifteen, and twenty. Think of the suspense, the anxiety, and the suffering. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . .* He is eternal goodness. Why did He give? You say, "Because He loved the world." It was before that. God gave in order to say that He was righteous. Turn to Romans 3. I wish we could comprehend that God cannot forgive you apart from the death of Christ. It is impossible. God is love, but God is a holy God. God is a God of justice. He is a God of mercy. God will never sacrifice His holiness on the altar of mercy. When God forgives, His justice and holiness must be satisfied and not bypass. God always loves. The cross did not bring out the love of God. God always loved. God always was merciful. God always was benevolent, but God was always holy and just and righteous. People look and say, "If there is a God, why in the world does not He deal with this?" He did. "If there is a God, why the war?" He dealt with it. Look at Romans 3. You say, "God is not fair." Romans 3:24: *Being justified freely by his grace . . .* Look at verse 25 and 26: *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (or satisfaction) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* God can not forgive me. God can not justify me simply because He is God and He is merciful. He has to be just. No court in the world can give you mercy and justice. God did. On Calvary's cross, the Bible said, *He that spared not his own Son . . .* God punished every human sin in the world in the Person of His Son. He did not draw back His hand. God's justice was satisfied. That is the first reason that Christ died on the cross to say that there is just God in Heaven. A lot of people judge God by, "Man, look what happened there. If there is a God, why does He not do something?" He did do something. You think it is funny. Nobody has ever suffered like the Son of God. He is God the Son. As man, He could suffer. As God, He could add to His suffering infinite value. On Calvary's cross, there was compressed all the heartaches and all the sin and all the wickedness of mankind. Jesus Christ died for every bit of it. God spared not. He did not pull back His hand. The Son did not spare Himself. The vinegar, given to Him to kill pain, was given to folks who were crucified. He refused it. He saw what was in that cup the night before the crucifixion. The Father said, "This is what it will cost you tomorrow." I want you to intelligently die, intelligently suffer. Understand, He went to the cross not drugged to endure pain. He went to the cross with all of His faculties alert. He embraced it. God disowned Him. He died first of all to prove that God is a holy God and a just God. He gave His Son because of man's sin that He might be merciful. God can be merciful. He was merciful already. But, His hands were tied. Get a hold of this now. If Christ had not died for man's sin, God's Own hands would have been tied by the holiness and justice of God. You would be asking Him to do wrong in order to forgive. God cannot forgive you and do wrong in doing it. But, He satisfied His justice.

When God saves sinners, it is not at the expense of His justice. God is just as He justifies a sinner and declares him righteous. That is why God gave His Son. Now, how did He get it? Well, He spared Him not. You think of the agony of the Son. You think of the incarnation of God. I do not understand. God the Father, God the Son—one God manifests three persons. I do not understand that. If you could understand it, it would not be God. I just happen to be God's creature. He made me. You will never be God. To understand God, you will have to be God, and you will never be God. You are always His creatures. But, I found out what God is like in the Word of God. The Bible teaches one God manifest in three persons. I do not understand. You explain, and you lose your soul because you will deny it. He spared Him not. The infinite steps down in the womb of a virgin and takes humanity in Himself. And forever not just this here, He is a God-man. He is a God-man today. As He sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, He will always be the God-man, always identified with humanity. He did that. My, what condescension! The incarnation, the selecting of poverty! Deliberately. Nobody has ever been as poor as Jesus. He selected the poverty. He selected the wicked city of Nazareth. Can any good thing come out Nazareth? He did that deliberately. He chose the worst of places for His birth place. He lived upon the earth. The whole time was a time of assault and battery by the Devil. He went to the cross, and He died accursed for you and me. He became the burnt offering. Ephesians 1 talks about the sweet savor of Christ. The burnt offering is where a person brought an offering, and it was all for God and nothing for self. There were some offerings you offered to God, and something went to the offerer. When the Lord Jesus Christ died, it was all for the Father, nothing for self.

Let us look at the recipients. *For God so loved the world . . .* What is the world? That is a mass of people who do not love, trust, nor serve God. Isaiah 53:6: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Look at the character. This is what God said about you and me. Look at our character. Romans 5 gives four marks of our character. Number one, *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.* That is moral inability. "Why don't you stop that?" Hey, you do not understand. They cannot stop that, without strength to live like God intended us to be. Do you have strength enough to meet the first commandment: *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* "I can't, Lord. I can't. It is impossible." Nobody can without strength. Second, lack of merit. He says, *Christ died for the ungodly.* That is a deliberate withholding of dues to God, that which belongs to God. Third, He calls us sinners. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners . . .* The word *sinner* means *erring one, constantly missing the mark for which God had made us and constantly doing it.* Fourth, He said, . . . *in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . . For if, when we were enemies . . .* Enemies means what? *Personal animosity, actively taking up a position against.* Now, that is who Christ died for. God has sent His Son to the world.

Look at the reasons, *should not perish . . .* Perish? That word never means annihilation. You find it used with the man in the hogpen: *I perish with hunger!* The Bible talks about the sheep perishing. It means the negative, all hope in Christ is gone. Perish. All Heaven, all union with God, all joy, all peace, all happiness is lost and lost forever. He said He gave His Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life. Everlasting life is a term, a quality. Everybody is going to live somewhere forever or exist, but we would not call it life. Open the Scriptures to Luke 16 in the record of the rich man when he died, he went to hell. He is alive, but you call it death. We do not call it living. It is suffering, intense suffering. All people will live somewhere forever, either in Heaven or hell. You are there alive, but we do not refer to it as that. We say, "Man, this is life." What is it? Everlasting life is quality. Jesus said in John 17:3: *What is eternal life? And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* Before I got saved, I thought I was alive. I thought I was living, and then the Lord Jesus came into my heart and life. I said I did not know God was like this. I did not know that salvation was this wonderful. I did not know. Why? I was not living. I thought I was living. Everlasting life is fellowship with God forever and forever and forever. I would rather have Him. You can take the golden city and the gates of pearl and the streets of gold. You can have that. That does not satisfy your heart. It does not satisfy your heart here below. He satisfies my heart. Christ is all in all. *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 closing, let us consider the manner of the gift received. Go back to John 3:14-18: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned . . .* We are not talking about intellectual knowledge like a historical figure of George Washington. We are not talking about that. Believing is a trust, a committal. Everlasting life does not come by works. Why? *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us . . . For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* When you get saved, you go to work because you love Him. But the matter of going to Heaven is the gift of God. You cannot earn it. You cannot buy it. You cannot cry enough tears. You cannot be baptized enough times. You cannot have communion enough times. You cannot give your riches to the poor enough times. It is not by works. Why? We would boast about it. Boasting about that is pride. No, it is a gift of God. *Not of works, lest any man should boast. . . . whosoever believeth in him . . .* It is a gift received by faith, not feeling, but faith. Faith is a hand that reaches out and takes. Turn to Numbers. The Lord Jesus gave this passage so that a Jew would understand what He is talking about. Numbers 21. The children of Israel came out across the Red Sea and the wilderness. They murmured. They sinned. God sent fiery serpents among them and bit them. The people were dying. Moses cried to the Lord. I read Numbers 21:6: *And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.* Verse 7, they said we have sinned. Verse 8, this is the Lord's instructions: *And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.* That is a stupid snakebite cure if I told you that. But, it is not stupid if God tells you that. "Make a serpent of brass. Put it upon a pole. Tell those that are bitten. Look. When he looks, he lives." *And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.* What did he have to do? He had to know he was bitten. He was dying. He heard about that serpent on a pole out there in the middle of a camp of three million people. Some of those people died just as sure as I am standing here. Why? "That won't work. That won't work. That is dumb. That is foolish. Hey, I am dying. I got snake bit." One of them said, "I do not have anything to lose." He crawled out the tent door and lifted up his eyes to do what God said that he did not understand. When he looked, he lived. What did he do? That is faith. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned . . .* Today, you know you are a sinner; you know you are dying. God put His Son on a pole called Calvary 2,000 years ago. He punished Him instead of you. Now, God said if you will put your faith, if you will look in faith to Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross, you will live. You say, "Man alive, there has got to be more to that." It is not more than that. That is faith and faith alone. James Proctor, Manchester England, departed from his mother's God and became an infidel. In agony of his soul with his wickedness and unbelief, he wrote this song called, "In Jesus." "I've tried in vain a thousands ways, my hopes to raise, my fears to quell, But what I need the Bible said is ever only Jesus. My soul is night (He wrote this before his conversion.); my heart is steel for light, for life I must appeal to Jesus. Though some should sneer and some should blame, I will go to Him because His name is ever only Jesus." He came in His darkness. The Lord saved Him. Listen to the last verse he wrote, "He died. He lives. He reigns. He pleads. There is love in all His words and deeds for His name above all names is Jesus." Now, how does this wonderful love come to you? It comes by faith. No priest can give it to you. No water can impart it to you. No ritual of the Lord's supper can give it to you. Faith is the hand that reaches and receives the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the eye that quits looking at itself and trying to save itself. It looks by faith 2,000 years ago on a bloody hill called Golgotha where Jesus Christ died on the cross to save you. He will save you if you look. I am going to give one other illustration. Charles Hadden Spurgeon was one of the greatest preachers of all time. He was under conviction as a teenager. He went to church one Sunday. He

could not go to his own church, but he went to another church. There was snow everywhere. The people could not get out. He went to a little Methodist church. The preacher was not even there. There was a layman reading the book of Isaiah. It said, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.* Charles Hadden Spurgeon was in the agony of his heart and conviction of sin. That man said anybody can look. He did everything in the world with that verse. He looked back and saw the misery on young Charles's face. He said, "Young man, you look miserable. Look and live." Charles Hadden Spurgeon said, "I looked that day by faith, and the burden lifted from all my heart." Salvation is as near as a look of faith to Jesus Christ.