



God So Loved the World

John 3:16-21

Dr. Tony Chute, Lead Pastor

Overview: The most famous verse in the Bible contains the most glorious truth and the most precious promise in all of Scripture but is followed by the most dire assessment and most disturbing consequence in all of human history. The glorious truth is that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; the precious promise is that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish but have everlasting life. The dire assessment is that the world loved the darkness rather than the light; the disturbing consequence is that apart from Christ the world stands condemned. This series of contrasts highlights our need to understand the nature of the Father's love, cherish the accomplishment of the Son, and treasure the application of salvation by the Spirit.

01. The love of the Father originates within Himself, is directed toward the Son, extends to the world, and necessitates final judgment for unbelievers.

02. The accomplishment of the Son includes the incarnation of Christ, the sinlessness of Christ, and the crucifixion of Christ.

03. The application by the Spirit brings about true repentance (turning our hearts from darkness to light) and produces genuine faith (believing in the Son), resulting in eternal life.

That You May Believe

1. What misconceptions do people have today about the love of God? In what ways do people overemphasize the love of God? In what ways do people minimize the love of God? How does the Bible describe or define the love of God? How does this text show that love does not exclude God's judgment?

2. The language of God, "giving" and "sending" His Son, can be misleading if one assumes that Jesus was sent unwillingly to do what was necessary for our salvation. How does the doctrine of the Trinity help us to appreciate that God did not send an angel to save us, but rather He Himself came to save us? How does the doctrine of the Trinity also help us to see the Father's love for the Son and the Son's love for the Father? (See John 17 for further insight).

3. How does John view human nature, according to this text? What are humans like, in terms of their preference for light and darkness? How does John's assessment of human nature prove itself true today as people become more self-centered and less inclined to respect law and order? What is the cure for such darkness, according to John?

4. Why is hell a necessary corollary to heaven? How is condemnation the appropriate counterpart to salvation? Would God be good and loving if He were not also just and righteous? Would salvation be of any value if everyone received it without a payment for sin or transformation of the heart?

5. What does it mean to live in the light? Is there anything that we can hide from God? What would it look like for church members to live in the light with regard to one another? Could we still encourage one another to walk in obedience to the Lord and love one another when we fail? Pray that we will continue to be transparent in our lives and more like the Lord in His love.

For Further Reading: John Bunyan, *All Loves Excelling* (originally published 1692; Banner of Truth Trust, 2022)

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