

W505_John_3-16.mp3

[00:00:03] Let us pray. Our God and Father, we offer the possibility of a company like this uniting to commemorate the love that spared not his only son. And with it brought the gift of life that is to be endless. And here we are at worthy of the least of thy mercies. Rejoicing in this wonderful gift, this marvelous fellowship. And we pray thee as it enters into our meditations this evening, as we go over the things that we know most clearly, we may be glad of the opportunity of revising and reviewing the unspeakable gift of Christ. Be pleased to bless those who would be with us if they could. We thank Thee for the memory and prayer of those who hold us up, although they are not able to join with us. We pray Thee that if for any in the meeting now or coming later, or any measure disturbed or distracted, they may find in the emphasis upon the love of God a refuge that's sure and perfect are we bless thee for the gift of thy word, which so reveals the purpose of thy grace. And we thank thee for the faith that holds it to be true. For Lord left to ourselves, we may have been at this present moment, tearing thy book to pieces. We take no credit to ourselves, but thank thee with all our hearts that we look upon this word as true a lamp indeed to our path. A light that leads us to glory.

[00:01:47] He's with us now. We pray thee. And as the word is opened up and the tape recording is made, all be pleased to grant that it may be used so that others at distant parts may also join with us in this marvelous gift of thine and a wonderful love that spared not his only son, so that they may be sure that thou art indeed a father to them, and they are indeed thy children. And that covers all their needs, not only for time, but we bless thee for eternity. Keep us. We pray Thee, Lord and true to thee and help us in all our ways to acknowledge Thee. We ask these things for the Lord Jesus Christ sake. Amen. Amen. This is a recording made in the Chapel of the Open Book and is number five of the series entitled Spotlight. I think most of you who are listening to me by now realize that this is an opportunity. Not to take a series on one particular aspect of teaching, but to get little help on all sorts of passages, whether they belong to our particular calling or to another. So spotlighted is for the moment. And the spotlight tonight is on John 316. And of course, there are some who may say, oh, well, we know that. I hardly think you need bother to make a tape on that. Well, even if we do know it, friends, we're such a privileged people.

[00:03:27] If we do. There's much that comes out of a passage that you know so well because the inspired word of God is not like ordinary writings of men. Suppose we look at it and read it once again. I do remember that at a conference of ministers of the word. They were a challenge whether anyone would stand up and quote correctly. John 316. And one stood up. He didn't quote it correctly. A second one stood up. He didn't quote it correctly. So naturally he dropped out the first word for. Four is a logical connection. And if you're going to quote a verse all by itself, I suppose it would be natural to say God so loved the world. Because if you say for God so loved the world, it links it with something. But strictly speaking. Unless you have that logical connection, you haven't got the way in which our Savior introduced. John 316. So will you go back with me in the reading of this passage to verse 14? And as. You see. And then verse 14. So as and so are an indication of a figure of speech called simile. It's got to liken something to something else. It differs from metaphor because metaphor doesn't say I am like a door. I'll say you said I am the door. Like a door would be simile. So when we have this as and so give it place friends, it's likening something and here we have it then.

[00:05:10] 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. You see, you haven't lost anything. You've gained. There is a sort of background to this, John 316 which must never be forgotten. Now, there are some who emphasize the love of God until they make it into a sentimental affection without any reference to righteousness or holiness, which is the essential character of the living God. Don't forget that the God who so loved the world is described elsewhere as a consuming fire. And then next. I do remember passing along Whitechapel years ago and seeing over a fanlight a little mission was held there. God is love and nothing else. Well, that may be true if you know what God's love is. But what they meant, I believe, was love. And don't say anything about anything else. But you see, friends, if God was love in that sentimental sense, he certainly wouldn't have sent his only son to be a sacrifice for sins. So it looks as though God himself. Could not countenance sin, even though his love went out to us to save us. So let's be evenly balanced over this. God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.

[00:06:56] Now this word, so again, is a word that we want to be sure about. I remember asking one of my daughters when they were quite little ones. I forget which one it was now, what this meant. And she said God loved us like this. Put her two arms out. Well, that's a good idea. But that isn't what it means here. It doesn't mean God's love is so vast as we may think. It means God loved the world like this. That's the word. So here. So let's make sure of that first, shall we? Look at the Gospel. According to Matthew Chapter 118, The Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 118. Just to get a little idea of this particular expression. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was so. But you couldn't put that in, could you? That's the word. The birth of Jesus Christ was in this wise. God loved the world in this wise. Don't you see? It's to do with manner and not with amount. Let's look at another one because it's important. Chapter six, verse nine. Perhaps you'll know what that says before you turn to it. After this manner, therefore, pray ye. Nothing to do with magnificence or greatness, but manner or worried about it. And we've got Matthew. Just look at chapter five, verse 12. Rejoice and be exceeding. Glad for great is your reward in heaven for so. Persecuted the prophets which were before you. In like manner as you are being treated now.

[00:08:53] Order gate in verse 24. Leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way and first be reconciled to thy brother. And then. Then come. So come with. You've got the reconciliation as a basis. And in verse 46, I won't give you any more, but I think this is enough. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye. Do not even the publicans the same. So I think that's demonstrated that when it says God so loved the world, it isn't so much looking at the vastness of His love, but the character of his love and the character of his love is Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Even so must the son of man be lifted up? Said Christ, to this very same gospel. So now it tells you that however much love there is in the heart of God, it can never compromise with regard to sin. He loves us. But he sent his son to be a savior. And that savior didn't come here and preach sort of lovely truths and parables and work miracles. He came with the express purpose of dying, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. So out of this well known text, you see, there is something that we do well to ponder. Now in John four. So let John speak for himself. We have this word. So in verse six now Jacob's well was there.

[00:10:37] Jesus, therefore being wearied with his journey sat thus like this on the well. He sat as a wearied man on the well. Well, I think that's enough without going too far

that this particular word translated so is the manner and not the amount. Well, of course, that is the basis of the gospel that the Apostle Paul preached to. He does emphasize the love of God, but he does emphasize the need to be justified. And if you cannot be justified in yourself, God will see to it that justification is yours. If you believe in him. He's provided for it and he provided for it in such a way that you could never doubt his love for you. He spared not his only begotten son. He spared him not, but freely gave him up for us all. That's John 3:16. Well, then there's another aspect, which I think we do well to ponder for a moment. That whosoever believeth in him. Now there are those, of course, who are so taken by the word whosoever that they make it practically their gospel. There's a hymn which has the words in it, God said whosoever. And that means me. Well, you see, their education has been neglected, I suppose, or they haven't bothered because whosoever doesn't mean anything. Whosoever what? You know, we call the verb in grammar. The verb because the word verb means the word. And the word of a sentence is not whosoever, but what whosoever does.

[00:12:28] So this doesn't say whosoever that means me or you. It says believing. And then the next thing is this. I was speaking of grammar. I don't know much about it, but I boggled at it when I was at school. But this is not soever whosoever believe it, but to take it literally that every believing one it's the believing one that's in view and every one of them, without exception, will get everlasting life. But you don't preach the gospel that God intended to be preached if you really say. Whosoever you must say whosoever what? Whosoever believeth or every believing one. Paso Pisteuo. If you want the actual. Every believing one in me should not perish but have everlasting life. There's the alternatives. I think if our Savior knew that the alternative was eternal conscious torment in what was be called traditional hell, he would have said so here. He didn't. He put the alternative of having life everlasting or perishing. I feel somehow we do great injustice to our savior. If we add to his words. Oh, I know the word. Everlasting punishment comes, but I want to find it in its right place, in its context, before I hand it out to everyone indiscriminately. And there are some folks who go about emphasizing everlasting punishment who wouldn't tell you where it comes in the first place in the scriptures, if you ask them. So they think of it. And when you do find it, you find it in a context that you cannot apply to everybody indiscriminately.

[00:14:22] Whenever we've had this passage before us. Then for God so loved the world. God loved the world like this. So whenever we preach this gospel, which we can do in John, let us remember that it's not merely indiscriminate love. It's love. That went to the extreme of sending this beloved son that justice may never be questioned. When you and I stand in the presence of God, no one will ever be able to rise up and point the finger of us at us, for we have been justified freely and there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. But there's condemnation here in this context. Verse 17 for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn. That shows that condemnation is an alternative. Possibly either you have everlasting life or condemnation ends in perishing. And that's a terrible alternative to think any person with ordinary, everyday common sense would hesitate twice as to whether they would choose everlasting life or perishing and being condemned. And yet, how many can hear this most blessed text which has been preached more perhaps than any other one in gospel services and yet go out unmoved. It makes you wonder how it was that we who are sitting here. We heard it and we believed. So bless God for his grace in that sense. Now out of this spotlight on John 3:16 comes a little problem.

[00:16:05] And this is the problem that I have. It took us the first epistle of John, written by the same man, the first epistle of John Chapter two. 15 Love not the world. Not all the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. You see, the same writer said, God so loved the world. And then the same writer says to the believer, Love, not the world. The father sent the son to be the savior, and the love of the father is not in this one who loves the world. But don't you see? It all depends on that word. So. When anybody is warned in the scriptures not to love the world. It. Isn't that. We've got to be offhand or have no kindness. But it's got to be in line with God's attitude. We mustn't be taken up with the world and love it for its own sake or for its pleasures or for its opportunities. If we love because we give them were in line with God. That's the So God loved the world like this. If you conduct the world like this, then you're walking in the steps of the Savior. But how many of us need to be reminded that the world is a fascinating attracting, something that could lead us very far away from walking in his steps? So John is correcting any possible misunderstanding of that passage here? Supposing we look now at one John chapter four, verse nine in this was manifested the love of God toward us.

[00:18:12] You see, that's the word. So in this like this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we we might live through him. Or again, look at the next verse in this. Herein is love. Not that we love God, but that he loved us. I don't put a full stop there because you know now how he loved us like this and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. So you see, God could never love us and give us eternal life without blotting out our sins and giving us a righteous standing in His presence. So however much we stress, John 3:16 we will remember that God loved the world like this, and like this meant he went to the extreme of sending his beloved son to die. The death on Calvary. That sin might be forgiven righteously and we might be given an acceptance so that it could never be challenged either by man or by angels or any powers, whatever. And then we'll go further with this. And we note in chapter four, verse 11, Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Boy, that's a tester, isn't it? If God so loved us, if God loved us like this, is there anybody listening to me who says, you know, that's me all over? I think most of us are conscious that the love we have for one another and the love we have for the poor perishing world outside must be a very meager thing in his presence when it's measured up against this yardstick.

[00:20:08] God loved the world like this. And it says here, beloved, if God so loved us, loved us like this, we ought also to love one another. And so the story goes on. Let's go back again now, shall we? To the gospel and see the way in which this question of the serpent being lifted up. Was carried forward by our Saviour. Later, when he spoke to the people. Chapter eight, verse 28. Chapter 8:28. They understood not it says in verse 27. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the son of man, then shall ye know that I am he and that I do nothing of myself as my father hath taught me. I speak these things. When ye have lifted up the son of man. What does that mean? Chapter 12:32 Same Gospel. 12:32. A voice had come from heaven. Let's go back to verse 28. We profit by it. Father glorify thy name, he said. Then came there, a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again. The people, therefore that stood by and heard it said that it thundered.

[00:21:51] Others said an angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world. Now, should the prince of this world be cast out? And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This, he said, signifying what? Death he should die. If I be lifted

up. It's not possible to read those words that he said that was how he was going to die without knowing they've already been written in John three. As Moses lifted up. Why was a serpent put on a pole? The serpent in this scripture is rather a picture of Satan. Why should that be put on a pole? The point was that serpents had bit the people and they were dying. And when Christ was crucified, we are told that he died as a sin offering. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. Sin was crucified on that cross. But he didn't die. He didn't commit sin. We did. There was the serpent that caused the trouble on that pole and he was vanquished in him who died on the tree. So lifted up as a special place in John's testimony. I think there's yet another passage. Is it in verse 34? And the people answered him. We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever. How says then the son of man must be lifted up? Who is this son of man? Well, then, of course, you have carping criticism, quoting a bit of scripture, not knowing it all.

[00:23:35] And they turned their backs on him. But he was lifted up friends and lifted up in that sense. I can't help feeling that when it says in Romans the eighth chapter, God spared, not his own son. That it was purposely referring back to Genesis 22, because in the Septuagint version, the Greek version of the Old Testament, the same word that is translated, is spared. Not is there the word thou hast not withheld thy son thine only son from me. You remember Isaac was born miraculously when both Abraham and Sarah were past age, when they had already waited ten years and nothing happened. And finally Sarah said, Well, I think with a pair of old fools, I think we. We ought to abide by the laws of the land in which we live. The Code of Hammurabi is in British Museum and says this I was mentioning this Sunday morning, but you weren't all here. And. She gave her hand, made to Abraham as a second wife. And the result was Ishmael. And, you know, quite a number of God's people have got a few ishmaels about I don't mean physically, but they've tried to help God out with his purposes. And the result has been tragedy. God intended what he said, but the test was to wait. I think one of the biggest tests that we can ever go through is to wait patiently and not put out a hand to save the Ark of God.

[00:25:10] Poor Abraham and Sarah, they got an Ishmael. And then when the time came, Isaac was born and he was born like one from the dead. He emphasized the resurrection power of God and mentioned so in Hebrews 11. But it speaks about receiving him from the dead from which he received him in the first case in like manner. So this child that was the child of promise. Then God tested Abraham. Our version of it

says tempt doesn't mean tempt to do evil any more than attempt means to do evil. It means to test. Abraham. Yes, Lord. Hereby. Take now, thy son. Now. He didn't stop there. Look what God said to Abraham. Take now. Thy son thine only son. And he didn't stop there. Take now thy son thine Only son Isaac. Whom thou lovest. If ever a band entered into the heart of God. If ever a band anticipated in his own relationships. John 316 Abraham did at that moment. For God so loved the world. He loved the world like this, that he spared not his only son. And Abraham heard that call. And he steeled his heart. Did he went forward. And when he was almost about to do it, then the angel said, Spare. It's all right, Abraham. Now, I know it was a test that Abraham came through it.

[00:26:55] I don't think it could be a greater test for anybody. But you know what happened following that? Abraham had a title given to him. He was called a friend of God. And Abraham knew what it meant when God spared not his son and anticipated John 316 as perhaps none of us can ever do. And so there we have that emphasis. Now in the epistle of Peter we have. Not. John, in his epistle says what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us. And Peter uses the same expression What manner of persons ought we to be? Well, that's the argument, isn't it? If this doesn't influence our life and our walk and our witness, there's something missing. If we have been saved at such a cost, if love has been manifested to us in such a degree, it ought have some reflection back again. Not that we can ever reproduce by any sense at all, but at least in hope and in effort. So we have Peter saying. What manner of persons ought we to be? We sometimes sing. Love that passes knowledge. And in that he meets us all measureless boundless, fathomless love of the Lord. And there is a text in scripture that you remember comes in an epistle to the Ephesians to know what is the breadth. Lake's depth and height. Well, we are out of our depth there, friends. I'm no mathematician. Most folks know that. But I do know this, that I live in a three dimensional world.

[00:29:00] Like breadth thickness. If I know the three dimensions of this chapel, I know all the dimensions. It's possible. Now what false dimension means, I don't know. But I was told if I did know, I'd be able to go through a door that was shut the same as our Savior did in resurrection. Now, that leaves me just wondering. I don't know where I am, but mathematicians speak and philosophers speak of a fourth dimension. Right? Depth, Length. Breadth. And you get in the epistle to the Ephesians, all those are height, far above all the depth. When we were Krishnas, hopeless, godless and so on. Then it follows from that and says, and to know the love of Christ. So that breadth and length

and depth and height was an approach to something else that was unfathomable. Who what philosopher, what mathematician is ever going to encompass or explain to others the love of Christ? The apostle says, which passeth knowledge. So there is something in the book which we are supposed to know, but it also warns us it will never be beyond us, at least in this life. The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge and the love of Christ, can never be disassociated from the love of God that sent Him for this wonderful Genesis 22 that I've referred to with regard to Abraham. And Isaac has got another little passage in it, which speaks volumes. Isaac said to his father.

[00:30:51] Father? We've got the knife, we've got the fire. But where is the lamb? His father with a heart that was bleeding, I think my son. God will provide you. Hello. Then it says these words and they went both of them together. This brings me to another line of teaching, which sometimes I've heard in the distance as though Jesus is a very gentle, loving person and God is a strict father. I suppose the poor kids have had that, told them and told it. That was a sort of home they lived in. Don't conjure up the idea of an angry God in the distance and a loving Jesus keeping him back. Friends, the Scripture says it was God who spared not His son and his son willingly came. They went both of them together. That's gospel truth, friends. And the other isn't. There was no possible divergence of opinion as to whether one should go or one should stay. The Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me was the Son of God that was loved of his father and came willingly. So I come back to our original text. John 316. John 316. God love the world like this all keep all those words which you find translated so or in like manner. Keep them well before you. God loved the world like this. He sent his son to be the fulfiller of the type that Moses put up in the wilderness and lifted up his son, the spotless Son of God.

[00:32:57] Who was there crucified. That the curse of a broken law might be removed. That God's righteousness should be vindicated. That there could be no possibility of patting anybody on the head and saying, well, run away and don't do it anymore. All friends. If you're saved, you're saved with a sense that no possible words of mine can express. You are made meat. You measure up to all the demands of holiness. Colossians says so. You're going to be presented holy and without blemish. Why not? One of us, however much we think of ourselves, would dare to say that of ourselves. By ourselves. And if we did, those who have to live with us would soon put us right, wouldn't they? Or am I only speaking for myself? Oh, no. You know as well as I do. So

here we have then a text. I'll go over the first part again. God loved the world like this. And the second was not whosoever and leave it at that. That means nothing. That every believing one without distinction but every believing one. The fixer brought me out of darkness into light straight away. Was he that hath the son hath life. And the only way I could have the sun. Was explained. That I believed what God had said about his gift. And that has lasted me without the possibility of turning back. Since I was 20 years of age and now I'm over 84.

[00:34:46] I think I can say, like the man who was born blind and had his eyes open. One thing I know, one thing I know that when I put my trust in the Son of God who was sent by the father's love, I did pass from death unto life and shall not come into condemnation and have before thee not only everlasting life, but glory beyond dreams. Now, those to whom I am immediately speaking in this chapel. I feel they've all got to that position already. But I'm speaking in a tape recording and there may be some soul somewhere, either in this country or elsewhere, to whom these words may come, perhaps with a force I never had before. And I'm sure all of you who are listening to me will pray that it may be so. But someone will, as a consequence of this tape, be may tonight will be numbered among those who believe every believing one. You don't add to it by promises. You don't add to it by good works. They all come afterwards. But every believing one in this gift of God passes from death unto life and shall not come into condemnation. What a gospel word this is. When I understand one, the evangelist who left this country many years ago to conduct a series of gospel missions in Canada, the text he took for the first night was John 316. And the text he took for the second night and the third night and the fourth night was John 316.

[00:36:35] And those who ran the mission said he, Aren't you ever going to preach any other gospel than that? But he said, as everybody believed it, yet they said, oh, no, well, I'm going on. He says tonight with it. Now, of course, that may be an eccentricity, but this text us all stood out as it so far as preaching of the gospel is concerned, that God, not the world like this. Like what? That He gave. Gave what? Gave. Whom gave his only begotten son. No other son of God was like the Son of God, the only begotten Son. That every believing one in him is the alternatives should not perish. Expect us. Should not perish, but have. Life everlasting. Well, that's as far as I can go this evening, friends. But I do ask you to compare and see the reason why, John. He says love, not the word, because that's not the love that the father had. That's getting tangled up with this poor

old world. You can't love the world. So as God loved it and get tangled up with it. So there is no contradiction in John 3:16 and one. John 4. It's only the fact that it was the gift of God in the one's case. And it's a wretched, terrible world to get tangled up with in the other. And I felt that possibly someone may be blessed by having that particular thing sorted out.