

# P Levy John 3v16

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, what I want to do over the next few weeks is I want to take individual verses and squeeze the juice out of the orange. It's not my normal custom. My normal custom is to take a chunk of scripture. But it seems to me as you look through church history that God has particularly blessed certain verses in the preaching of God's word. And I want to try and preach on some of them.

And so John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. It is the most extraordinary summary of the gospel.

The context is the meeting with religious Nicodemus who saw Jesus by night, whose heart was drawn to the Lord Jesus and yet he is ignorant about this foundational truth. And Jesus has to tell him, doesn't he, unless you're born again, you won't see the kingdom of God. You won't know God. And it's amazing the Lord Jesus uses the story of the brass serpent to do so. Of all the history in the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus uses that story. Here's the scene. There's Moses and he's literally being surrounded by dying people who are dropping left and right.

Whoever has been bitten by the snakes is destined to die. And yet Moses receives a message from God. God graciously provides a remedy for dying people who deserve to die.

[ 1 : 28 ] And so Moses commands, commanded by God to raise up a serpent as high as he could. And Moses' simple message is, if you will but look on the serpent, you will live. And the Bible says, whoever did that, whether they were old or young, whether they were close to the serpent or whether they were far off from the serpent, whether they'd just been bitten or whether they were on the verge of death, whoever looked on the serpent was healed at once.

And so the Lord Jesus said, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved.

The Lord Jesus speaks of his Father's unspeakable, inexpressible love. And so when Jesus says, God so loved, we know that he's referring to his Father.

Because the next phrase says, doesn't it, for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. So three things. Number one, the wonder of his love. Number two, the measure of his love.

And number three, the promise of that love. So Christ is clearly speaking of the love of the Father. What do we know about God? I said to you, who is God or what is God?

[ 2 : 51 ] I suspect most of you would say to me, God is love. Twice the Apostle John makes that statement. Nothing so defines the very being of God than the fact that God is love.

And in order for you and I to understand this love, we need to ask ourselves, who is the object of God's love? Now look with me at the last two verses of the chapter.

Can you see there? The Father loves the Son. And so you and I need to first understand, first and foremost, about the Bible, that God loves his Son.

The Father loves his Son. The Father who is the infinite God, and who has an infinite love, and that love is given to his Son.

His Father loves his Son with an infinite love. He says, doesn't he, this is my Son, whom I love at the Baptist. This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased.

[ 3 : 59 ] So when the Lord Jesus talks about his Father's love, and whenever the Bible speaks of the Father's love, we must never lose sight of that. Here in our verse, it speaks of the Father's love towards sinners.

There's John 3 verse 16. And so when God loves sinners, he loves them with the love with which he loves his Son.

God has eternally purposed, before the foundation of the world, that human beings, people like you and me, would be including in the showing of God's love.

So God created man and woman in his own image. He created us to be the unique recipients of that love.

We were created to be able to comprehend and respond to God's love. It's what made man, human beings, so unique in creation.

[ 4 : 59 ] It's what makes man the crown jewel of God's world. The very fact that God created man in the image of his Son. He created human beings to resemble his only begotten Son.

And so as the Father looked at human beings when he'd made them, he said they are very good. They are a reflection of his Son. They are made in the image of God, and his heart can go out to them.

To that reflection of his Son. And that is what makes the fall in Genesis chapter 3 so vile and so wretched. Because yes, Adam disobeyed the command of his Father in Heaven.

But the great crime of Adam was that he despised the love of his Creator. It wasn't just the breaking of the rules. Ultimately, Adam stepped on his Father's heart.

He turned his back on the God who created him. The devil knew what he was doing. The devil is a brilliant theologian, isn't he? The devil understood that man was the crown of God's creation.

[ 6 : 14 ] Human beings were the special object of God's delight. And Satan knew that in his intense hatred for God, he knew the best way to strike at God was to turn man against his Maker.

And so that sentence, you know God said on the day you break it, our relationship will surely die. And death is the appropriate punishment always when a covenant is broken. A covenant is a binding together of two parties.

And death means a separation, a tearing apart. On the day, God says, you break this covenant which belongs together, we will be separated.

We will be separated. And so we see that in Genesis 3. Your body and soul are separated. That is the consequence of the breach of this covenant.

[ 7 : 17 ] So Adam is expelled, isn't he, from the presence of his Maker. And man, who is the delight of the Father's heart, suddenly becomes the object of God's wrath.

Because the anger of God is the response of a God of love towards sin. A God who loves his Son can only respond in one way to the despising of his love.

And it is holy wrath. And that's why, in the last verse of John chapter 3, can you see it? Jesus gives us the bottom line of the Gospel. And he says, whoever believes in the Son has a turn in life.

Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life. But the wrath of God remains on him. It's present tense. Paul says, by nature we are children of wrath.

By nature. And so when you understand that, when you understand the whole Bible context, you come back to John 3.16, can you see it? And it is astonishing that God does not say, for God so hated the world.

[ 8 : 26 ] It says, for God so loved the world. How are we to interpret the word world? What does that mean? Well, we must use the word world in the way that John used it.

And John understood it when he wrote his Gospel. And his epistles. He witnessed, didn't he, the remarkable phenomenon of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus going into the Gentile world.

And he saw the mighty work of the Holy Spirit conquering Gentiles. And they turned to God.

Gentiles became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. And John is astonished to observe the Gospel. It's not just for Jews, but it's for the whole world. For different types of people. I think the most natural reading of the word world is the world of Jews and Gentiles.

God so loved the world of rebellious Jews and Gentiles that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jesus is describing fallen humanity with a generic term.

[ 9 : 34 ] He's so loved. And the contrast is the world in rebellion against him. It's not talking about every single individual human being.

It's talking about a world that has rebelled against God. He so loved humanity. He so loved human beings that by nature were children of wrath that had no desire after God.

That they wanted nothing to do with him. He so loved them that he sent his one and only son to the world. This world that conspires against him.

That conspires against the Father's anointed. Sound 2 verse 2. So what this text is saying.

Is that God so loved a world that hates his son. A world that has no use for his son. A world that despises his son and wants no part in his son.

[ 10 : 33 ] And God the Father who loves his son with a love that is beyond our comprehension. Loves fallen wretched humanity. And so he has decided to redeem people like you and I.

Rebels. God. And wicked humanity. And mentioned in one breath. Now before I go on I want to make this personal to you.

Because ultimately I think you can put your name in John 3.16. Think about that. Paul says, doesn't he? That he loved me and he gave himself for me.

And so can I ask you to do that? Can you do that in John 3.16? For God so loved Paul Levy. And let me ask you this question. Why should he love you?

Why should you be the object of God's love? Who were you at one time? Before God found you.

Before God visited his salvation. You too lived in enmity towards God. With a heart that was hostile to him and his son.

[ 11 : 38 ] The Bible tells us that God has loved you with an everlasting love. He's loved you with a love that never began.

And so for his people he loves them with a love that will never end. There was never a moment in God's eternal existence when he didn't love you. He's always loved you.

You have a place in his will, in his heart from all eternity. And so this little verse that we trot out so quickly, don't we? We must be filled with wonder.

That God so loved the world, rebellious humanity. Yes. But we must know specifically that that love included us. How can that be? A God who is holy. A God who is so holy that the angels, they cover their faces at him.

How can this God allow his name to be mentioned in one breath with godless humanity? How can it be? Does God have to compromise himself? Does God have to bend his rule?

[ 12 : 45 ] It's an absolute impossibility, isn't it? He is of pure eyes. It's so pure are his eyes that he can't even look on evil. God is so just that he must deal with every sin that has ever been committed.

This is a God with whom there's no compromise. And so let's secondly see the measure of his love.

The measure of that love. How much did he love the world? Well, the text is obvious, isn't it?

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. The father gave the son of his love. The father gave the eternal object of his love.

He gave the one who had been his delight for all eternity. So, Galatians tells us, in the fullness of time, at the right time, in order to save human beings, in order to redeem them, God gives his only begotten son to become the sacrifice for sin.

He gave him sacrificially. That God knew that there was only one way to resolve this great dilemma.

[ 13 : 54 ] How shall I pardon rebellious human beings? How can human beings be reconciled to me? And the only one solution, Christ tells us that from all eternity, he has been the father's willing servant.

Who delights to do his father's will. That he willingly took upon himself to become the sacrifice for sin in the fullness of time.

And God knew that there was no other way to resolve this dilemma. The Bible says to you this lunchtime, God will by no means clear the guilty. And therefore, because he can find no means to clear the guilty, the only solution was that his son, the son of God, at just the right time, would become the son of man.

In order to become the substitute of guilty Jews and Gentiles. So that on that basis, a world, you and I, which are in rebellion against God, can be reconciled to God. And so God would be freely able to love Jews and Gentiles who are totally unlovable in themselves, through the son of his love.

There had to come a solution in which the love of God would be vindicated. And also his justice would be vindicated. What is the justice of God?

[ 15 : 19 ] Well, it's just that attribute that upholds and vindicates the integrity of his love. So think about it. If human beings had never sinned, we would never have experienced the negative aspect of God's justice.

But now that we are transgressors, now that we have sinned against the love of God, the justice of God requires the punishment of sinners.

And so a way had to be found. In order for God to love this world and to save sinners and to reconcile sinners to himself, a way had to be found.

And that was accomplished on the cross of Calvary. So the cross of Calvary. So the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ has its origin in the eternal council of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the divinely appointed symbol of the curse. The cross was appointed by God as the place where love and justice would meet.

[16:32] So think of it. There hangs the eternal Son of God who is also the Son of Man. The one who is eternal and the infinite object of the Father's love.

That Son experiences the full reality of hell. So that he is utterly forsaken by God. And so he cries out, does he?

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? What's the Father's great objective? What is God's great objective?

The Father's great objective is to glorify the Son. The Father who loves the Son. The Father who has declared that from heaven, this is my Son whom I love.

On that day, he subjected that same Son to his wrath. I wish I could explain it.

[17:36] Martin Luther said, God's forsaken by God who can understand it. And yet it is precisely in that way that God paved the way. That he could freely bestow his love.

That love with which he loves his Son, he can give to you this lunchtime. His Son as the substitute of sinners became the object of his wrath. So that on the basis of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, God can now freely love his people.

However, the Father must have loved the words of Christ on the cross. It is finished. I have borne your wrath. I have paid the price.

Let me read to you from 1 John chapter 4 and verse 10. It says this. It says, In this is love. Not that we have loved God.

But that he loved us. And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. That is what defines the measure of God's love.

[18:47] He so loved the world that he gave the Son of his love. That we might be the recipients of that amazing and astounding love.

And on the basis of that sacrifice, the finished work of Christ. God is well pleased with that. And he makes a promise to sinners.

So can you see that promise? That's the third point. The third is the promise of that love. For God so loved the world that he gave his Son. That whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

And so God promises to you and I that if we will put our trust in the Son. We will get the exact opposite of what we deserve. And that is the amazing nature of the grace of God.

Grace is often defined, doesn't it? As the unmerited favour of God. It's getting what you don't deserve. In other words, God gives his goodness to us when we don't deserve it.

[19:45] We forfeit the favour of God. But I want to say to you, it's much more than that. It is that God gives us the exact opposite of what we deserve. What we deserve is damnation.

And look what he offers. He offers life. What we deserve is wrath. What we deserve is to be forever banished from his presence.

But in his Son, he welcomes us into his presence. And that is the astounding truth expressed by this invitation. He promises us eternal life.

So we thought of Adam, didn't we, in the Garden of Eden. Who broke that covenant with God. And on the day you eat of it, you will surely die.

But those who believe in the Son, are restored back into covenant with God. And who in Christ enjoy union and communion and friendship with God.

[20:49] God promises you that if you believe in my Son, he says. If you trust in my Son, I promise you, I will bring you into an eternal relationship with myself. And I will restore you.

It is so simple, isn't it? And so profound. Can you see what it says? It says whoever believes in him. Whoever trusts in him. Whoever looks to him.

Whoever relies on him. Whoever touches the hem of his garment will not perish. But have everlasting life. Why is it that God promises such extraordinary blessing, eternal life.

For something so simple. Why? Because the Father loves his Son. That's why. You cannot honour the Father more than by believing in his Son.

There is nothing that so stirs the Father in the very depths of his being. As when human beings believe in his Son. Nothing pleases God more.

[ 22 : 03 ] And so this afternoon, whether your faith is weak or strong, it doesn't matter. Because God does not save you because of how strong your faith is. God saves you because of the object of your faith.

And so let's go back to that scene from the book of Numbers. There's a bit in Israelite who's only a few breaths away from dying. And whose eyes are fading.

And he catches a glimpse of that serpent. And he was healed at once. That's the point I'm making. Weak faith.

Strong faith. Have this in common. The same object. And God is so, so pleased.

When you believe in his Son. Listen to John 12, 48. The one who rejects me, Jesus says. And does not receive my word. Has a judge. The word that I've spoken will judge him on the last day.

[ 23 : 04 ] For I have not spoken on my own authority. But the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment. What to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life.

What I say therefore. I say all that the Father has told me. Can you see from that verse and from other verses. That our greatest sin.

Is the rejection of Jesus Christ the Son. That is the greatest sin of all. The rejection of the only begotten Son.

Who is freely offered to us by his Father in the Gospel. God offers his Son to sinners. Promising that if they believe in him they will not perish. God cannot be honoured anymore this afternoon.

Than when we believe in his Son. When we believe in his Son we endorse who God is. That's really what verse 33 is talking about in John 3.

[ 24 : 14 ] It's talking about when it's set there isn't it. Verse 33. Whoever received his testimony sets his seal to this that God is true. We are endorsing that entire witness of what God has said in his word.

That we are to believe in his Son. That's why Jesus said in John 6 verse 14. For this is the will of my Father. That everyone who looks on the Son. And believes in him should have eternal life. It gives hope.

And so will you believe. Let me read to you from Numbers 21. The Lord said to Moses make a snake. Put it on a pole. And anyone who is bitten on it. Bitten by the snake.

Can look at it and live. So Moses made a bronze snake. And put it on a pole. That when anyone was bitten by a snake. And looked at the bronze snake. They lived. You see the only thing that will disqualify you from eternal life is unbelief.

Your sin cannot disqualify you. That's the promise. The promise is free and unconditional. It invites you to come with all your guilt and pollution and corruption and baggage.

[ 25 : 17 ] And God will freely pardon you. If you will trust Christ. Now how can God promise such amazing blessings? Because he loves his Son.

Through this man. It preached the forgiveness of sins. This is the God who says in Isaiah 1. To a wicked and ungrateful people. Come let us reason together.

Though your sins be red like scarlet. I will make them white as snow. And so let's finish with this. It is true that you cannot honour God more.

By believing in his Son. You can't honour God any more than that. But you cannot dishonour him more. And you cannot provoke him to greater wrath than by rejecting his Son.

And so John 3.36. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life. But the wrath of God remains on him.

[ 26 : 23 ] Do you love the Father's Son? Do you love the one the Father loves? Have you trusted in him? Can you rely on him? Well if you do you have eternal life.

And if you don't. Well you're one breath away from hell. Let's pray.