

GOD'S UTMOST GIFT

A transcription of the sermon delivered
by Thomas John Dexter
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Let us stand in reverence of God the Almighty and His [inerrant,] infallible, impeccable word.

The sermon text: John chapter 3 verses 13-21:

And no one has gone up into heaven except the *One* having come down from heaven— the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted-up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up in order that everyone putting-faith in Him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave *His* only-born Son, in order that everyone believing in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life. For God did not send-forth the Son into the world in order that He might judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

The *one* believing in Him is not judged. But the *one* not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-born Son of God.

And this is the judgment— that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their works were evil.

For everyone practicing bad *things* hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, in order that his works may not be exposed. But the *one* doing the truth comes to the Light, in order that his works may become-visible— that they have been worked in God [NTTL].

[Prayer:] Heavenly Father, please, grace me with Your message for the people this morning. I am so humbled by this opportunity, and I ask that You would just speak Your truth through me. Please open hearts and minds and ears to receive Your truth, Lord. May You be glorified this morning. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

You may be seated.

God is not a God who delights in wickedness (Psalm 5 verse 4).

His very being hates the wicked one and the lover of violence (Psalm 11.5).

The LORD hates a disdainfully proud or aggressively haughty look, a lying tongue which is to say deceptive speech, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises immorally vain intents or plans, feet that make haste to run to evil or wickedness, perjury, and a lying witness, and one who sows bickering quarrels, distrust, or enmity among brothers (Proverbs 6.16-19).

The LORD hates pride and arrogance and an evil way and a mouth of perverse things which is to say twisted, perverted speech (Proverbs 8.13).

The devising or planning of evil in the heart against another—all these are what I hate, declares the LORD (Zechariah 8.17).

A silent showing of hands: How many of us here today who are able to understand these words of the only true and living God, how many of us have devised or committed any one of these things which He hates?

Out of the heart come forth evil reasonings, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false witness[ings], slanders, defamations. These are the things which defile the person. These are the things which make the person unacceptable to God (Matthew 15.19 to 20).

That which proceeds out of the person, that is what defiles the person. That is what makes the person unacceptable to God. For from within, out of the heart of people, the morally bad reasonings come forth; sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, desires to acquire more and more irrespective of need, depravities, adulteration of the truth in order to deceive, inordinate indulgence, jealousy, envy, slander, defamation, the act of looking down on others, foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the person. All these evil things make a person unacceptable to God [Mark 7.20-23].

A silent showing of hands: How many of us here today who are able to understand these words of the Lord Jesus Christ, how many of us have ever devised or committed any one of these things which makes a person unacceptable to God?

The cowardly ones [and] faithless ones [and] revolting ones and murders and sexually immoral ones and practitioners of incantations, charms, or spells and idolaters and all the liars—their just portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Revelation 21.8).

To lie is to make an untrue statement with intent to deceive *or* to create a false or misleading impression. A lie is committable by word or deed.

A silent showing of hands: How many of us here today who are able to understand these words of the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, how many of us have ever in our life devised or committed any one of these which has earned us the second death, made us duly worthy of a share in the lake of fire into the ages of the ages?

The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the human race, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God (Psalm 14.2).

God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men
To see if there is anyone who understands,
Who seeks after God (Psalm 53.2[, NASB]).

The Creator has made His inspection. And the report is in:

They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 14.3[, NASB]).

Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 53.3[, NASB]).

Devoid of moral strength. Incapable of doing what is good. In a helpless condition, practicing the opposite of what God demands. That is the report in Romans 5 verse 6.

The report in Romans 5 verse 8 is: They are sinners, which is to say, they are breakers, violators of divine law.

More than that, worse than that, He views us as His enemies, liable to His wrath to come. Such is the report stated in Romans 5 verses 9-10.

Helpless sinners at enmity with our Creator and liable to His coming wrath, and rightly so.

Should any one of His creatures dare mutter, "God made me this way," I have a word for such an one: Your Creator did not make you helpless. The Holy One did not create you sinful. Quite the contrary. The LORD says, "I am good (Psalm 119.68), so I made the human race good (Genesis 1.31). I, the LORD, My word, and My ways are upright (Deuteronomy 32.4; Psalm 3.4; Hosea 14.9), and so I made mankind upright (Ecclesiastes 7.29). It is you! *You* have sought out many devices and schemes (Ecclesiastes 7.29), and now there is no one who does good, not even one. I, the LORD, I am good. I made you good. My ways are morally correct, but you have sought out your own ways! And many of you haven't even the sense to hide from Me as did your father Adam in Eden, but you flaunt it without shame, and with a high hand, and even to the point of putting the branch into my very nostrils!¹

"Since you have rejected My upright ways for your own—go on, and walk in the ways of *your* heart and in the sight of *your* eyes. But know this, that in accordance with My word in Ecclesiastes 11.9 I will bring each and every one of you into judgment for every last thing that you do, say, think,

and even feel! And am I not right to do so?"

We stand accursed. For it has been written, "Cursed is the one who refuses to keep the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 27.26[, NET]). "Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law" (Galatians 3.10[, NET]).

What hope do we have? Is there hope for us? Is there hope for humankind?

Do we know that the words Jesus spoke were just what His Father had given Him to speak?

"My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (John 7.16[, NASB]).

"I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (John 8.28[, NASB]).

"The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative" (John 14.10[, NASB]).

"The word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14.24[, NASB]).

"The words which You[, Father,] gave Me I have given to them" (John 17.8[, NASB]).

"I have given them Your word[, Holy Father]" (John 17.14[, NASB]).

This being the case, when Jesus taught, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6.27[, NASB]); "Love your enemies . . . expecting nothing in return" (Luke 6.35[, NASB]), when those words were spoken, whose words were they in actuality? The words of the One under whose law we stand condemned, the words of Him who has declared us His enemies.

But does He not cause the sun to rise on the evil? Does He not send rain on the unrighteous? Yes, yes He does. Matthew 5.45 tells us so. This alone, this common grace, the provision of the basic essentials to human life testifies to the kindness of God; not only to His kindness, but to His forbearance and long-suffering toward His enemies, this common love of God.

Oh, but there is more than that.

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 [John 3.16].

Let it be said again in Romans 5.8: "God demonstrates His [own] love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" [NASB]

And again, God has sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4.9-10).

We, the accursed, the sinners, the enemies of our Creator, He told us to love our enemies, and He set the sterling example.

For God so loved: There are two ways this can be understood. "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His Son, His unique Son" or "for in this manner God loved the world: He gave His Son, His one-of-a-kind Son," and some versions do render it this way such as the Holman Christian Standard Bible[, God's Word to the Nations, MacDonald's Idiomatic Translation], the New Jerusalem Bible, the New English Translation, Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation. It is as if God said, "World, this is how I am going to love you: Here, I give you My Son, My one-of-a-kind Son, My unique Son."

Or, it could be understood as "for God loved the world to such an extent that He gave His Son, His unique Son" or "for God loved the world to the degree that He gave His Son, His one-of-a-kind

Son."

Regardless of which meaning is intended, both indicate (the former, implicitly; the latter, explicitly) that the Father's love for a dead and dying object was of such intensity that it resulted in Him giving up His one-of-a-kind Son in order to save it!

That is incomprehensible [love]. Incomparable. Unparalleled. Unsurpassed. Unrivaled. Peerless. Matchless. Priceless! And what does the world do with it?

Most reject it and will to their grave. Many say they *have* received it, but by their deeds they deny it. Others deny verbally the existence of this great God of love and His Son altogether.

But a few—out of the billions upon billions born, living, and dead since the days of Adam—a comparative few have this love wash over them! Who are they? They are those who by the power of the Holy Spirit confess, "Jesus, you are my Lord! And I, this wrath-deserving wretch that I am, I am your slave. What would you have me to do, my Master?"

God so loved the world: For centuries the debate has been, "What exactly is the intended meaning of the word 'world' here?" Well we don't have time this morning to discuss such matters, but I shall give two of the arguments. And perhaps this will pique interest in some to further study this out on your own.

[Article 2 of] the Remonstrance from 1610 [states this:]

Jesus Christ the Savior of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16[, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."] And in the First Epistle of John [chapter 2 verse 2 which reads,] "And he is the [atoning sacrifice] for our sins: and not for ours only, but . . . for the sins of the whole world."

[Article 14 of] the Confession of the Waldenses [from 1655 states this:] "God so loved the world, that is to say, those whom he has chosen out of the world, that he gave his own Son to save us by his most perfect obedience (especially that obedience which he manifested in suffering the cursed death of the cross), and also by his victory over the devil, sin, and death."

The basic argument is, on one side: universal atonement; on the other side: limited or particular atonement.

God so loved the world that: That four-letter word "that" expresses the result of God's love for the world. God's love for the world resulted in Him giving up His unique Son. If we love God, and we are commanded to in the great commandment [in] the law—"YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND" [Matthew 22.37, NASB].—if we love God, what is the outcome of our love for Him? What is the result of our love for God? God's love was demonstrated in giving. As a result of His love God gave to the world. What do we give [to] Him?

God loved the world to the extent or degree that He gave His one and only Son or His one-of-a-kind Son so that: This is the *purpose* for God giving His one and only Son. The purpose God gave His Son to the world was to rescue everyone who believes in the Son.

Now there are many who say, "I believe in God. I believe in Jesus." But they couldn't care less what God or His Son says.

Credited to Abram as righteousness was not some mentality that says, "Well of course I believe in God." No, Abram believed what God said! [Genesis 15.6; cf. Romans 4.1-3, 18-22] The difference

between the two is that of being lost or saved.

Abram had already been declared righteous, justified at the moment his faith was credited to him as righteousness, and then not even two chapters later he is commanded by God to "walk before [M]e and be blameless" [Genesis 17.1, NIV]. The command to walk before the Almighty God and be blameless was not a means to righteousness. No, Abram was to live out his life holily and blamelessly *because* God [had] declared him righteous! This is an unchanging, timeless truth of the Scriptures. As it is written in 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 19, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness" [NIV] because grace in no way excuses sin!

God loved the world to the degree that He gave His one-of-a-kind Son in order that everyone who believes in Him: Believes into Him, believes upon Him. Their trust is moved to rest once and for all upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and from then on it is hands-off for us. We entrust our very lives to Christ, our eternal lives to Christ.

In order that everyone who believes in the Son should not perish, but have eternal life: There have always been these two ways and only these two ways.

Daniel 12 verse 2: everlasting life or abhorrence for the eternity.

Matthew 18.8: enter into the life or be cast into the everlasting fire.

John 3.[16]: may perish; may have everlasting life.

[John 3.36: eternal life or the wrath of God remains upon you.]

John 5.24: eternal life as opposed to judgment.

John 10.28: eternal life as opposed to they shall perish.

Romans 2.7 and 8: eternal life as opposed to indignation and wrath.

Romans 6.23: death as opposed to everlasting life.

Galatians 6 verse 8: corruption as opposed to everlasting life.

One may claim to love God all that he or she wants; but if you circumnavigate the Son, you will not see God.

Second Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 9 states that those who reject the Son of God will pay the penalty. And that penalty is eternal destruction, or eternal ruination, away from the presence of the Lord. Oh, the judgment from God is not a place for mercy. The Great White Throne Judgment will exercise no mercy [Revelation 20.11-15] because that mercy is being extended now. It is His long-suffering that is His mercy toward the wicked, the unrighteous, His enemies, the sinners, they are receiving that mercy now that they may turn to Him and repent and be rescued! [Romans 2.4; cf. Joel 2.13; Jonah 4.2; 1 Timothy 1.16; 2 Peter 3.9, 15] Because as we have already seen, they are already condemned. All that awaits them is the execution of the sentence, and there will be *no* mercy. Each will receive just punishment, not one whit more not one whit less than they are deserving [cf. 2 Samuel 3.39; 1 Kings 8.32, 39; Job 34.11; Psalm 28.4; Matthew 16.27; Romans 2.6; 2 Corinthians 11.15; Revelation 2.23]. Not even common grace in the lake of fire! Even those who reject the Son can now appreciate the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, and receive rain, and can love their family, their [spouse,] their children, even their pets.

Our loved ones that are not saved—in the eternity it says that God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of those who have been saved [Isaiah 25.8; Revelation 7.17, 21.4]—our loved ones, those most precious to us, we will not even miss them!

We will not even miss them.

Do we see the importance of evangelizing? Just taking even one tract; placing it somewhere where the Holy Spirit may be pleased to use the word of God contained in that tract to convict a condemned sinner, that perhaps just one more can be rescued from the impending judgment, that maybe just one more may be spared the wrath to come.

Ultimately it is just one sin. Ultimately it is just one sin and only one sin that damns. It is unbelief. It is rejection of God's utmost gift to the world. That is how wide the mercy of God is. The most wretched, filthy, sin-infested soul *can* be saved if that one will turn from his or her sins to Christ and confess Christ as Lord! Unbelief in Christ is a more serious sin than murder, rape, molestation, ethnic cleansing, abortion, adultery, incest, satanism, human sacrifice, homosexuality! The rejection of Christ is more serious than all of them combined! Because there is only one that God *will not* forgive and that is the rejection of His utmost gift. Though a man or a woman commit all these and more, that one *can* be saved if he will move his trust to rest upon Christ.

If one does not receive the pardon which none of us deserve, then we *will* receive the punishment we *do* deserve.

Allow me to read our sermon text again and perhaps we will have a bit more of an insight as to how precious and extraordinary God's act of giving His Son to us is. Let us stand again in reverence for the LORD and His word.

Again, John 3.13-21:

And no one has gone up into heaven except the *One* having come down from heaven— the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted-up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up in order that everyone putting-faith in Him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave *His* [one and only] Son, in order that everyone believing in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life. For God did not send-forth the Son into the world in order that He might judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

The *one* believing in Him is not judged. But the *one* not believing has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-born Son of God.

And this is the judgment— that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their works were evil.

For everyone practicing bad *things* hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, in order that his works may not be exposed. But the *one* doing the truth comes to the Light, in order that his works may become-visible— that they have been worked in God [NTTL].

As I challenged all those in attendance last Saturday [12/19/09] at the Casual Christmas Gathering to take one tract and place it, won't you take just one more so that perhaps one more can be saved, rescued from the judgment to come?

Let us close with prayer: Lord God, Your love is indescribable. Before we were saved by You, we were Your enemies, sinners, condemned by our own doing. How can we ever thank you enough for what You have done for us? We're so undeserving. Please empower us to please You more and more. And we pray for those who are not saved, Lord, that it may please You to this day rescue even just one more as You have rescued us through Your Son. Oh, how we love you, Lord. We owe You everything. Amen.

1. The reference is to the primitive text of Ezekiel 8.17, the text as it stood before it was "corrected" by the Sopherim. See Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (1966; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 1:357; *The Companion Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990), 1116 (marginal note on "their" at Ezekiel 8.17) and Appendix 33.