

“God’s Salvation for Humanity”

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Today’s scripture: John 3: 16-17

“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.”

Prayer:

“Almighty God our Father, we are gathered here to worship you, to honor you and to glorify you. You have created the universe including this earth according to your plan. And you also created the humans in your image and likeness so that we might serve you, to glorify you, and to bring joy and gladness to your heart. We earnestly pray for your presence among us. We know that you love those who seek your face.

We earnestly seek to hear your message today -- the message about your plan of saving the humanity from darkness and eternal death. You love us so much that you sent your only begotten Son, Jesus, into this world. And you suffered to see Him to bleed and die on the cross of Calvary. We believe that we are made right before you because of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus. Help all of us believe this grand plan of human salvation so that we all enter into your true light and life.

Speak your message through the poor lips of this small servant of yours, we implore. Help us hear with reverent fear and take the message into our hearts so that a measure of the true faith may work in us and grow fully to reach the salvation you are giving as a gift of grace. We pray all in the name of our Savior and Lord Jesus. Amen.”

These verses we read, John 3: 16-17, are perhaps the most important verses in the New Testament. They are so very important because they declare God’s love of the humanity and the purpose of sending Jesus to this world as for saving us, you and me, from eternal death, which all people are destined to meet unless we meet Jesus and are saved through Him.

Some of you may wonder why we need salvation. You may think in yourself, “Why, I am fine where I am. My life is fairly comfortable and no one is bothering me. I have been successful in life, people treat me fairly and I treat others well. I am a pretty good family man or woman, love my family, they love me and overall I am happy as I am. What do I need to be saved from?”

Friend, if you have such thoughts, you are one of the most miserable human beings before God today. In Luke's gospel chapter 12, verses 16 through 21, Jesus spoke of a parable about a foolish rich man as follows:

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Friends, there is nothing wrong with being successful or amassing fortunes in this world. I would not encourage you to gamble in casinos. But remember that riches are God's gift to you so that you may use it wisely to honor God and to show your love for the neighbors in return for God's blessings.

When you forget this truth and do not know God who granted blessings to you, you are a miserable person because you are only traveling down towards the death of eternity. And you will spend eternity without God and Jesus. I am not saying this to denounce the wealthy, but those who do not know God in spite of their worldly riches. No matter what you might have materially, unless you know Jesus and are saved through Him, you are simply traveling down the path to eternal death as the entire humanity has been destined to.

Scripture says we are all born in sin. The definition of sin is the state of being without God, without knowing the fellowship with God, without having the truth of God to guide you, without knowing the love of God to warm your heart and life. It is the state of being filled only with the thoughts and desires of greed, pleasures and depraved cravings of the flesh.

Romans 3: 23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In other words, when we are born as a human into this world, we are born without the glory of God, with no knowledge of God. And thus we are born in a sinful state of not knowing God. And that is truth. Do not confuse a just-borne baby's innocence as being sinless.

We are not talking here about the lack of crimes as defined in the legal sense. True a baby does not have any thoughts about committing crimes. It is also true that a baby does not know anything about God and will not know God until later in life a person comes to hear the gospel of Christ and learn of God's plan of saving us from eternal death.

You may then wonder what eternal death is and why God subjected the humanity to such a fate. To some of you it all seems like a cruel game that God plays with the humanity just because we are His creation and He is all powerful. And you think God is unfair and unjust. If that is how you think about God, you have come very well to this place today because

God has a message for people just like you. And that message is that God loves you in spite of who you are, in spite of what you think of Him, and in spite of the lack of faith in you. He knows our frame as humans because He made us.

Another important reason why God loves you with all your doubts and unbelief is that Jesus was here on the earth, lived for 33.5 years as a Jewish young man in the land of Israel in the first century. He had the same human nature just like you and me. And today He is sitting at the right hand of God in heaven in the resurrected body that experienced all temptations, piercing, nailing on the cross. Most of all, He is there in heaven as our mediator because He remembers all of His experiences here on the earth.

He remembers the temptations of Satan after fasting for 40 days in the wilderness. He remembers weary nights of praying alone, being tempted, tested, physically weary, hungry and most of all, experiencing disappointments from the unbelieving world around Him in spite of the whole-hearted labor of love He was devoting for their salvation. He remembers every moment, every experience, everything people said and did. In spite of all these He still loves us because He understands best our weaknesses as humans, having experienced them fully during His life here on the earth. Psalm 103: 14 says,

“For He knows our frame. He remembers we are but dust.”

When God created man, He knew that the first man and woman would fail through His foreknowledge. God has given us a free will to make decisions of our own. Adam and Eve were free to make choices in all ways they lived and served God. Likewise, you and I have the God-given freedom to choose the way we live and the way we serve God. That is why Adam and Eve were held responsible for their sin. Likewise, you and I will be held responsible for the way we have lived on the Day of Judgment.

For Adam and Eve the judgment was immediate because they were residents of the Garden of Eden, which was the most special place of all God’s creation. God prepared it especially for Adam and Eve. God had placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and gave Adam the privileged position of governing God’s creation here on the earth. You might say God made Adam the president of the world. But Adam and Eve fell into the trickery of Satan who appeared before them in the form of a serpent. The serpent beguiled Adam and Eve to eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

You might ask, “What’s wrong with eating a fruit? Why is it such a grave sin to be kicked out of the garden?” Friends, the motive of eating the fruit was to “become like gods.” The fear of God was gone from the minds of Adam and Eve when they chose to eat this forbidden fruit so that they might become as smart as God. That was the start of a false religion, orchestrated by Satan and acted by our first parents. Satan’s false religion could not abide

together with God in the Garden of Eden. The two followers of this syncretism had to be chased out of the garden. God and Satan cannot be followed together.

Brothers and sisters in Christ! In Matt 6: 24 Jesus warned,

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

If you think you can be a Christian and at the same time pursue fleshly cravings such as engaging in fornication, watching pornography, homosexuality and indulge in drinking and drug addiction, you are totally mistaken. If there is anything in your life that either take the place of God or take up an equally important place in terms of time and affection, you are trying to serve both God and your flesh. That will not do. God will not bless such a life and His Holy Spirit will leave you. And it was for this very reason Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden.

The curse of sin’s consequence began to work in the life of Adam and Eve. Changes started to affect their DNA as well as the natural environment from that very moment of curse. The human nature has taken the path of continued depravation, that is, corruption. Let us recollect how many millions of humanity, including six million innocent Jews, were killed in wars of various kinds during the 20th century. Evil terrorist groups are killing innocent people in the Middle East as we speak. We read the media report that hundreds of Iraq soldiers were killed in each month last year while fighting ISIS. We humans have not known God’s ‘shalom’ since the days of Adam and Even some six thousand years ago.

The curse of death, instead of eternal life with God, came upon the first parents as God had said, “You shall surely die.” Here, death means two things, both physical death of human life and the spiritual death of separation from God’s presence. When a baby is born, it lives days and years marching towards eventual death of its human life. The baby is born without the knowledge of God. And that is the reason the gospel of Christ is needed for every human being including each person gathered here. Apostle Paul explained this in Romans 6: 23;

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, let’s get back to John 3: 16 *“God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Friends, if you have a person you love dearly, would you be willing to give the life of your only child to that person? What parent in this world would be willing to see his son die a cruel death for a friend just because the son’s death is required to save the friend’s life? That is unthinkable in the human sense. But God chose to make such a sacrifice for you and

me --imagine the magnitude of such love of God, imagine the depth of such love! Can we even fathom the love of God in this plan of human salvation?

What is amazingly incomprehensible is that God's son, who came to this world as a human, was willing to obey His Father's will and be the lamb to be slain for the sins of the humanity so that sinners can be absolved of their sins and be made righteous before God and become His children. The love of God was in the heart of Jesus. The love of God moved Jesus to come to the world, to live each day as a human, to undergo a totally unjust judgment, to suffer humiliation and torture, then finally to die a cruel death on a cross on Calvary's hill outside of Jerusalem, so that you and I can be saved from the fate of eternal death in hopelessness and torment, but have eternal life with God in heaven. God so loved the world, friends! God so loved you and me! God still loves us today!

Verse 17 says, *"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."*

God's judgment will come, but today is a day of saving sinners. Jesus came to save sinners--to bring them to God's love by snatching their souls from sin's grasp and Satan's clutches. Where the gospel of Christ is declared, the Spirit of God extends His hand out to souls of men and women, children and older folks likewise, to bring them to God's fold of love. There is forgiveness waiting. There is a total cleansing of sin waiting.

Only believe in the power of the blood of Jesus that can cleanse your sins. Only repent and come to Jesus, to His cross. Kneel down before the cross and confess your sins. In humility plead for forgiveness. Then a great miracle is waiting to happen. You will experience a miraculous rebirth of your soul -- from the lost soul in darkness of sin and hopelessness into a happy and joyous soul filled with lively hope for eternal life with Christ and God and His great family in heaven and here on earth for eternity.

Romans 8: 1 says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

From the day you repent, accept Jesus into your heart and life, and make Him the king of your life, the Spirit of God will begin to guide you and you will begin to live, not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. To such people, there is no longer a condemnation because you will have been translated from your sinful past to a life with Christ Jesus. Jesus came for this very purpose, not to condemn the world but to save the world through Him.

What this world sorely needs is not more products of advanced electronics, cars that can drive themselves without a driver, bigger homes so you can throw parties, nor beachside villas to show off to the media. What the world needs in dire urgency is Jesus the Savior.

Apostle Paul declares boldly in Romans 1: 16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”*

Having learned directly from Jesus on the truth of God, quite possibly during the three years he spent in Arabia before he began preaching the message, Apostle Paul began to speak the message in full conviction that this gospel goes forth with the power of God to win souls to salvation, everyone who believes, whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, strong or weak, regardless of color of skin or cultural backgrounds. When you listen to the sound of the gospel, it rings a loud bell within your heart, so listen to the ringing within you, pay attention to the craving of your soul for cleansing, to the yearning to be free from the bondage of sinful life, to the thirst for the life-giving word of God, and to the longing for sweet fellowship with Jesus and His flock of satisfied and joyful people of God.

Now, you may ask, “What must I do to be saved?” When apostle Paul and his companion Silas were imprisoned on a false charge in Philippi, an earthquake occurred in the middle of the night and the chains of the prisoners were freed and the prison doors opened. The prison guard thought the prisoners had escaped and was going to kill himself, knowing well the penalty of losing any prisoner under his charge was only death. Paul restrained him from doing so. Having been impressed that Paul and Silas were men of God, the prison guard took them to his home and gathered all his family in the middle of the night, and listened to the gospel message. Wasn’t it wonderful how the Holy Spirit made it possible for this family to hear the gospel? Acts 16: 30-31 describe what happened,

And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Friends, note how simple the answer is to the prison guard’s question of “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas told him, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you and your family will be saved.”* And upon making their personal decision to believe on Jesus, they were baptized. Believe and be baptized! That is the simple message of the gospel in the first century and it is still the simple gospel message today! Nothing added, nothing deducted, the same simple message, “Believe and be baptized.”

Be warned, friends, there are religions and so-called Christian churches who have made the requirements of salvation quite a bit sophisticated than this simple message. They are trying to tell you that this amazing provision of salvation must not come so easily, must not come so cheaply. There must be some price for you to pay--something needs to be done or paid

for to make it valuable. Otherwise, you will take the salvation so cheap and you may not value it. If you have not paid enough for it, you may not get to enjoy it and you may be refused entry into heaven when you arrive at the pearly gate.

It sounds so logical, so convincing, so appealing to the human reasoning. So they have devised elaborate theological justification for the requirements of salvation. We call it 'works-based salvation theology.' Simply put, these religions bind their believers to various requirements of performing works such as bowing thousands of times before Buddha, praying before the image of Virgin Mary and so-called saints, making confessions to a priest periodically, attending various church masses and rituals, making monetary contributions to the temple or the church of certain amounts so that their ancestors could be pulled out of hell or purgatory, etc., etc.

Paul clarifies that our salvation is God's gift to us through His grace in Ephesians 2: 8-9;

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Friends, our salvation is totally a free gift of God. The only condition is that we believe on our Savior Jesus. This gift of grace comes to us through our faith in Jesus, not because we do certain things to acquire it.

The Catholic Church has deceived hundreds of millions of believers through the centuries with this works-based salvation theology and bound them under the bondage of works for salvation and kept them as the church's slaves. And they killed millions of true Christians for not accepting the pope's authority and not willing to come under their umbrella, according to a Catholic scholar's estimate. They have not repented of this awful wrongdoing. And they still excommunicate those who do not accept these requirements. God's judgment is waiting for them.

There are other denominations that are just as bad, using shunning policy to impose awful fear of being ostracized from their fellowship unless they perform the required obligations for the church. Jehovah's Witnesses are one example and the Mormons another.

Fellow brothers and sisters! True Christians believe in the freedom given to us because whatever was required for our sin's cleansing, whatever payment or price required was paid on Calvary's cross by our Savior Jesus, so that we might be set free. In John 8: 31-32 Jesus declared,

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

We have been bought with His precious blood. And now we are His disciples. Through the word of God and the enlightening instruction of God's Holy Spirit and His ministry, we have

come to know the truth of God. And the truth sets us free, free from any theological, spiritual or mental bondage that tries to ensnare us, to make us slaves of some man-made institution.

Let us never be deceived into such false teachings. Rather, if you come to have an opportune occasion to help a person suffering from such a bondage, it is our Christian duty to wisely explain to them what wonderful freedom Christ has made available to all who believe on Him. But you need to do it with genuine love of soul and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

While the religions of works-based salvation theology try to impose a bondage of spiritual slavery over your life, Christ has set you free and He declares that salvation does not come with heavy burdens including financial burdens. First of all, the gospel of Christ is free. God's true messengers do not demand money for the gospel just as Jesus did not, nor His twelve apostles, nor His seventy disciples when they were sent out to preach the gospel, as recorded in Matthew 10 and Luke 10:

And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

The truth of God is not for sale. God does not demand your money for His truth as if He lacks anything. And we are not going to demand money for this precious gospel of Christ that brings salvation of God to you. We will be damned if we do because the gospel is not for sale. You hear certain tele-evangelists demanding your contribution every time they bring on a message.

The minute they mix money with the truth of God, the message is tainted and it is no longer a message of God's truth. Do not be confused, brothers and sisters, God does not send out His messengers as peddlers of His truth to collect money from poor retirees and farmers and salaried people so their hearts are fed and nourished. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God Himself, declares from His throne in heaven in Revelation 21: 6-7;

"It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

The Son of God came as a human, named Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee, as a son of Joseph and Mary, to live and to die to save the humanity in the first century. He was resurrected from death on the third day through the power of God, and went up to heaven with His resurrected body that bore the marks of crucifixion. When He was dying on the cross, He declared "*It is done*" in John 19: 30;

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

His work of fulfilling the divine requirements for the human salvation plan was finished when He died on the cross. And He declares from His throne in heaven, His work is finished. The price has been paid for you and me to come and to be saved-- to come to drink from the water of life freely so that you soul can live true to God, from now to eternity. And this is totally a free gift of God to all mankind because He loves us.

You don't have to do anything -- just come to Him in repentance, in pure faith on Jesus and His blood--believe that His blood can wash away all your sins and make you whole before God. Believe this in all sincerity and true heart and purpose--that is what you must do, that is all you need to do. Then the rest of this miracle of salvation comes from God of heaven and earth. Believe and be baptized! Jesus calls you today. Come to Him and be saved.

Let us pray:

Our God and Father in heaven!

We thank you that the gospel went forth in Your power in the first century as recorded in the Acts, and it still comes to seeking souls in Your mighty power in the 21st century.

Through the lips of this poor servant the gospel has come to this congregation. Lord, look down on the hearts and souls of these people.

Their hearts have been touched and moved by the message of Jesus Christ who died for us. We have heard the word of Your call to come to be saved.

Help us take the first step to come forward to be saved, to have our sinful past be washed clean and to be made whole so that we can become Your precious children who will inherit Your kingdom and become citizens of Your heavenly city.

We ask your help in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen!