

Love Of God

1 John 3:1; John 3:16

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FOCAL 1 Read Responsively 1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

FOCAL 2 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.

A man came home from work one day and, terribly tired, he forgot and left his keys in his car. When he came back out sometime later he found that his car was gone - apparently stolen. The man, distraught, called the police, made a report, and then went back into the house grumbling to himself. Later on that night the man and his wife were disturbed by a knock on the door. When he went to the door, low and behold, there sat his car in the driveway, the keys still in the ignition. On the driver's seat was a note. He read, "I apologize for taking your car without asking, but I had a terrible family emergency. I am returning your car with a full tank of gas, and front row tickets to tomorrow night's basketball game, along with a gift certificate to eat at a fine restaurant. Please accept these gifts as my way of saying thank you, and I am sorry." The man and his wife were elated. They called the police and reported the car returned. The next night the man came home excited, and he and his wife went out on a well deserved night on the town. When they returned late that night they found their house was completely empty. While they were gone the cunning thief - using duplicate house keys - literally robbed them blind.

It's good to keep the right perspective, the right *point of reference*. A wiser person would have reasoned that - if someone took your car in the first place without asking - then that same person might also take your household, if you gave them the chance.

As humans we can be deceived. People can deceive us. Circumstances can deceive us. Space itself can deceive us. The ancient mariners quickly discovered that they couldn't go across a featureless ocean without a good point of reference - a fixed point to guide their ships by. The sailor used a device called a *sextant*. Sighting on the sun, the moon, or one of 57 navigational stars the skilled navigator could tell where his ship was on a nautical map. Frontiersmen and explorers knew that it would be foolish to go off into unmapped territory without a *compass*. We must have a good point of reference, a *fixed point* that we can anchor our lives on, or we will be lost!

Our point of reference for life cannot be life itself. A man took his 87 year old wife to the emergency room because she was having trouble breathing. The doctor examined her, put her on oxygen, then told the man that - in a few hours - his wife would be unable to breathe on her own. The man demanded that the doctor take every means necessary to keep her alive. "Put her on a ventilator if you must, but she must not die". The man loved his wife, as they had been married over 65 years, but his point of reference was off. You see, we all die. Even if placed on a ventilator his wife will eventually die. We were not created to live on this earth in this present state forever. **Dr. Adrian Rogers** - a good and Godly man who is now with the Lord - said:

"Life is as long as a piece of string. ... Death runs in my family, and it runs in yours"

When our point of reference for *life* is our here and now then we, like the mariner without a sextant or the explorer without a compass, will become lost. Our life does not consist of what we are *apart* from God.

The point of reference for our life cannot be based on *things*. A young man came to Jesus one day and said, **"Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (Luke 12:13)**. He was like many people who come to Jesus so they can gain prosperity or so they can fill their bellies. Jesus told this young man:

Luke 12:15 ... Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

If your point of reference for life is *things*, then what value will your life be when the things are gone. When the point of reference for your life is *health*, then your life will end when your health ends. When the point of reference for your life is *temporal relationships* then what will you do when your husband, wife, children, or parents leave you? Dear friends, life is a gift from God, and it is much more than the here and now. The Bible tells us that **we are created in the image of God:**

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Our point of reference should always be Godward. Our point of reference should be *the love of God*. What has God in love offered to us?

1. God's Love Examined

FOCAL 1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: **therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.**

As the Apostle talks to us, He wants us to know that there are those who are **sons of God**, and those who are **not sons of God**. Those who are **not sons of God** do not **know the sons of God** because the world has a different point of reference. Look at the text:

"the world knoweth us (the sons of God) not, because it knew Him (Jesus Christ) not".

The word "**knoweth**" in our text is a Greek word which means "**to perceive on an intimate basis**". The world cannot understand the Christian - the **son of God** - because the world has never known **The Son of God**. A Christian - a son of God - is someone who has *experienced the love of God*. The son of God is changed because **God bestowed His love on us**.

The son of God is a person who has said yes to the love of God. This is a person who knows Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

When the unconverted and worldly person hears:

FOCAL 2 John 3:16 For **God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...**

that person will first of all misinterpret the word "love".

How does the world define "love"? How does God define "love"?

You see, **to the world - to those who are not sons of God - "love" is an emotion**. In this world people *fall into* love and *fall out of* love. Boys and girls, men and women *fall in love*, stay together for a time, and because there's no *chemistry* they *fall out of love*. This is not Biblical love. In fact, it's not love at all. **Love is an action**. God did something because He loved the world. **God gave His Only Begotten Son. God gave. God gave His Only Begotten Son**. All men are inherently sinners. We all sin. We all depart from God. We all do that which offends God, and keeps us apart from God. On our own we are evil creatures, and we grow more evil with each passing day. We justify our evil. Television applauds evil, and pours evil into our minds. **God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son**. Our sins keep us apart from God, but the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ

Galatians 1:4 Who **gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:**

God the Father gave the Son, and God the Son agreed to that giving. The Father asked "**Who will go to make payment for man's sin?**", and the Son replied "**I will go - send Me**". What a wonderful sacrifice God made for whosoever! Jesus Christ left His Heavenly Throne and, in an act of supreme sacrificial love,

Philippians 2:7-8 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: {8} And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

What does it mean by "**God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son**"?

God gave His Only Begotten Son as the payment for human sin. The wrath of God that we all deserved was poured out on Jesus Christ. Humanity's crimes against God were satisfied once and for all in that Tree on Calvary. God gave His Only Begotten Son over to death. The Bible tells us that:

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Jesus Christ **tasted death for every person (Hebrews 2:9)** so that we who believe in Him will never have to taste death. Jesus bore the lash of God's judgment. As the Prophet said:

Isaiah 53:3-9 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. {4} Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. {6} All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. {7} He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. {8} He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. {9} And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son. God showed His love by the giving of His Son, by the Cross of Calvary, by the empty tomb. But think one more moment about this precious text, beloved by many and memorized by all. We read:

FOCAL 2 John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...

God so LOVED. This is past tense. The Bible does not say that God **loves** the world, but that He **loved** the world. What is the significance of this?

The love of God is an absolute. He cannot love sin. He cannot love the ways of the world. Many people believe that God *keeps on loving them regardless as to what they do*. God is apart from sin, and cannot love sin. **He so loved (past tense) the world that He gave (past tense, once and for all) His Only Begotten Son.** The Bible says:

James 4:4 don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.^{NIV}

The world and God are enemies, not because God desires that but because the world desires it. If the world would accept what God gave - His Only Begotten Son - then the world would become sons of God. But the world rejects the love of God. The world despises the thought that it is inferior to God. It despises the thought that it needs a Savior. This is why John wrote:

FOCAL 1 1 John 3:1 ... the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

God has given but one means by which a person can be saved, and that is by faith in Christ. The **world knew Him not**, and therefore cannot be saved. **W.A. Criswell** said:

NIV New International Version, used here for clarity

"The secular and material world is bold and blatant in its rejection of the gospel ... They refuse and repudiate the whole message of redemption, stating their opposition bluntly, rudely, and brutally. They say if we have tractors to move mountains, we do not need faith. If we have penicillin, we do not need prayer. If we have positive thinking, we do not need salvation. If we have the state, we do not need the church. If we have manuals on science, we do not need the Bible. If we have an Edison or an Einstein we do not need Jesus. They define life all together in secular and material [terms]."¹

The world wants a God Who is love, *but without Christ*. But God's love can only be experienced **through Christ**. **God so loved the world**. He calls all to a higher life through faith in Jesus Christ. **God so loved the world that He gave - once and for all - His Only Begotten Son.**

Love is there for the taking. You can accept or reject the offer - the choice is yours.

2. God's Love Received

FOCAL 1 1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called ...

Everyone is called to salvation, but not everyone answers that call. **God so loved (past tense) the world that He**

¹ from *With A Bible In My Hand*

gave His Only Begotten Son. Christ died for all, but not all receive. Some sit back and say "I'll receive tomorrow", or else they discount the message in its entirety. My prayer is that you all have received the love of God. My prayer is that you all have recognized that you are sinners in need of the Savior, and that you cast yourselves upon Him.

The Apostle says, "**Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!**". What a wonder and a blessing it is to be a child of God. When a person hears the Gospel of Christ and responds to that Gospel by casting himself on Jesus - trusting Christ fully for his salvation - then God **bestows great love upon us.**

The word translated "**bestowed**" in this text is a Perfect Tense in the original text. The Perfect Tense refers to an action that is completed in the past with permanent results.

God bestows His love on the believer, with the result that it keeps on being bestowed. You who have repented and turned away from your sin and who have *reached out to Christ* **are loved - and God keeps on loving you!** You are moved from the *past tense of God's love* - "**God so loved the world**" - to the *perfect tense of God's love* - "**God loves you as a son, and keeps on loving you**". As we said before **love is an action**, and when you responded to the Gospel call you became - once and for all - a son of God!

Think about this for a moment. **A son of God will**

always live with God. When God's love was bestowed on you, you were granted a change of estate. **You were called out of the world, and into the Kingdom of God.** What did Jesus promise?

Luke 18:29-30 ... Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, {30} Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

The son of God by faith in Christ casting his life upon the promise of God is promised by God to have **manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.** You are a son of God now, and a son of God into eternity. *God keeps on loving you, dear believers, no matter what might come.* Look at our context:

CONTEXT 1 John 3:2 **Beloved, now are we the sons of God, ...**

If you are saved by faith in Christ **NOW you are sons of God.** Not later, but NOW. Here is your point of reference: if you are a Christian, then you have answered God's call.

The Christian is *twice called*. He is *called to salvation* and, if he answers that call, he is *called to sonship*.

The word "**church**" in the original text literally meant

"**the called out ones**". A person is saved by responding to the call of God. We who are Christ's are **called out of the world**. We are no longer the "loved", as in "God so loved the world". We are those who *keep on receiving love*. The Bible says that the Christian has been

1 Peter 2:9 ... called ... out of darkness into [God's] marvelous light:

The Christian has been called out of darkness, and called out of death. Dear friends, if you are Christians then *your point of reference has changed*. **A son of God is not called to please himself, but to please the God Who saved him.** The world goes about pleasing itself. The target of this world is life apart from God. The Christian, on the other hand, is a creature *alive from the dead*. The Apostle wrote:

Romans 6:11-13 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. {12} Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. {13} Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

A Christ follower is *even now alive from the dead*. We are no longer like we were, but we are even now **sons of God**. Our point of reference is different.

As sons of God we are called to serve God. Not just in

the Church, but at every point of our lives. We who are Christians are called to glorify God in all that we do. The Bible says:

Colossians 3:23-24 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; {24} Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Everything that a son of God does is to be done **heartily, as unto the Lord**. Who **called us "Sons of God"**? God did! When He offered us salvation through the Cross of Christ we willingly received what He offered.

The Christian must not *compartmentalize* who he is. He must not be Christians here - in the comfort of the sanctuary - and something else when we leave this place.

Ray Kroc, the founder of **McDonald's**, wrote:

"I believe in God, family, and McDonald's. And in the office, that order is reversed."

This is not the Christian way of life. The Christian way of life is to *be a son of God*. God keeps on bestowing His love on sons of God. **We keep on being the sons of God**. We are sons of God in the marketplace, in the workplace, on the job, and no matter where we are.

Those who are *in the world* live for themselves, and yet are unsatisfied in their lives. Some of those *in the world*

go off to "find themselves". They know that their lives have no meaning beyond the moment. They live, they die, but they do nothing of eternal value. When they leave this life they are like a hand pulled out of a bucket of water - they make no lasting impact.

Jesus said:

Luke 9:24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

When a son of God lives like a son of God then God lives through him. **Live the life that Jesus lived.** Allow Christ to live through you. As Christians we are called to be salt and light. Both salt and light have the same thing in common: they are added to things in order to make them better. Salt is added to food to make it more flavorful. Light is added to darkness to make it bearable. As sons of God - if you are sons of God - you are called to live your lives as children of the Kingdom.

Let it never be said that any Christian in this Church be indistinguishable from the world. **God keeps on bestowing love on His children.** He left you on this earth to live for Him.

FOCAL 1 1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Five minutes after death everyone in this place will be somewhere. The son of God will be with God the Son. The worldly - the one who **knew Him not** - will be in a place of eternal torment.

You can choose to believe this or not, but it is nonetheless true. You have a choice of life. You can choose life by choosing Christ, or you can choose death by refusing the love of God. May God lead you to make the right choice.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

