

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Glory and the Love of God in His Justice

INTRODUCTION

There is a simplicity to Christian truth yet there is deep complexity. The simplicity can be summed up in that fact that:

- a) There are only 2 races in the world: Adam's race and Jesus' race.
- b) There are only 2 choices in the world: a wide gate and a narrow gate.
- c) There are only 2 paths in the world: a wide path and a narrow path.
- d) There are only 2 masters in the world: evil or righteousness.
- e) There are only 2 destinations in the world: destruction or eternal life.
- f) There is only one Savior in the world: Christ, the Son of the Living God.

John's famous verse (3:16) emphasizes that reality. Let us pray.

TEXT: John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, **that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.**

ETERNAL LIFE

We are told that the result of faith in Christ is eternal life. James writes, "*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*" (1 John 5:4–5, ESV).

We sometimes fail to grasp what eternal life is. If we simply think that it is life with no end, we fully don't grasp it. There is a sense whereby every human will live forever. The question has to do with the quality of that life, not the eternity of the life. Secondly, eternal life is also a present reality for the Christian. You have eternal life in reality (not in its fullness, but in reality) the moment you believe.

"Believers don't have to "wait" for eternal life, because it's not something that starts when they die. Rather, eternal life begins the moment a person exercises faith in Christ. It is our current possession. John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life." Note that the believer "has" (present tense) this life (the verb is present tense in the Greek, too). We find similar present-tense constructions in John 5:24 and John 6:47. The focus of eternal life is not on our future, but on our current standing in Christ."¹

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/what-is-eternal-life.html>

From the instant that one places their faith in Christ for salvation, God, as a free gift, grants them eternal life. What is that eternal life? Eternal life is that newness of life which the believer receives from Christ (*“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3–4, ESV)). Eternal life can be described as a new creation (*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV)). According to Ephesians 4:23–24 (ESV)

²³ *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,* ²⁴ *and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

So many people think of heaven when they hear the words “eternal life”. Certainly that’s true, but it’s grossly incomplete. Eternal life is to think differently. It is to live in the likeness of God. It is to pursue righteousness and holiness. We tend to think eternal life has to do with either a future promise or length of life. It is a quality of life that starts the moment we trust Christ and continues to become fuller and richer. Eternal life is now (*“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”* (John 5:24, ESV); and death does not interrupt it – it accelerates it.

PERISH

But there is another reality that the world must face. We have learned the awful condition of this world. There are none righteous. All have fallen short of God’s glory. Every human being is destined to die and live eternally in a state, John calls, ***perished***. This is a Greek word: **ἀπόλλυμι** [ap·ol·loo·mee]. The same word is translated in other places as destroyed, lost, ruined. Later in this chapter, John will use a terms like “condemned” and “the wrath of God on him”. Let us be very clear. The world, apart from any intervention by God is literally and not humorously, going to hell. Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 25:46 (ESV)

⁴⁶ *And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

That’s what John means in John 3:16: “whoever believes in him should not go away into eternal punishment ... but eternal life. Jesus refers to hell as “the unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43), and says that hell is a place “where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48). When we turn to Revelation, the descriptions of this eternal punishment are also very explicit:

“And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.”” (Revelation 14:9–11, ESV)

This is what “perish” means. Hell is a place of conscious, continual torment forever. God does not want anyone to perish. *“Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”* (Ezekiel 33:11, ESV). Peter writes, *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9, ESV)

It is important to know, this morning that if you have not believed in Christ, you are already perishing – you are already condemned. Judgment has already been declared. You simply await your punishment. So there’s a sense where John 3:16 is saying “that whoever believes in him will not perish; and whoever does not believe in him remains/stays in that condition of condemnation. As John Piper has written, “There is nothing you can imagine worse than having the omnipotent God oppose you with righteous wrath forever.”²

APPLICATION

Nobody likes to talk about hell. In my finite, sin-ridden humanity, I hate the idea of people going to hell for eternity. But as Augustine said, “If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself.”

I said in a previous message that John will show that there is no inconsistency with God. There is no contradiction between the love of God and the damnation of those who reject His Son. There is not contradiction between God’s love and hell. Those that assume that there is fall into a deathly error. You see, there is an assumption behind the question that assumes God loves people more than righteousness; that God loves humankind more than holiness; that God loves “the world” more than justice.

So let us tear down that wall and acknowledge that the thing that God loves most is what is perfect, pure, holy and good. If God loved people more than His righteousness, hell would not exist. But he doesn’t. John’s point is that God has set the terms. That’s what he has the right to do. The terms are righteous, just and holy ... and loving. Those who reject the free offer of salvation face the consequence of their decision. Someone may say, “If God sends me to hell, he doesn’t love me.” John answers that question in 3:16 but also in 1 John 4:9 (ESV),

⁹ *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

God loved you enough to send his Son as our only Savior. If you reject Christ, you are rejecting God’s love, not objecting to God’s love. Or stated by the writer to the Hebrews, *“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation . . .”* (Hebrews 2:3a, ESV)?

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/god-so-loved-the-world-part-1>