

# God So Loved(II)

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*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. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

John 3:16-21



## Whosoever Believeth in Him

John chapter 3 verse 16 is probably the most well-known verse in the whole Bible:

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.

Even people who don't go to church or don't believe in Jesus will at least be familiar with this verse.

In this verse it says, "whosoever believeth in Him." The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible uses the word "everyone" here, while in the Living Bible the translators prefer "anyone." Whether it says "whosoever," "everyone," or "anyone," it includes every single person in the world.

I'm really not sure how to give full expression to this verse, but I'll do my best. It says, "For God so loved the world." What does "so" mean here? When I was a child, someone had set these words to music,

and we used to sing them. Even though I sang along, I didn't know what the words meant, and I didn't know what this "so" meant, either. As I attended church and read the Bible, I learned that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, and that this Son was crucified and died. It was a long time, however, before I came to a firm belief in this truth.

There are people who come to believe in an instant without going through a long process as I did. The criminal who hung on the cross next to Jesus, for example, had lived as he pleased throughout his life in this world and then, just moments before he died, he came to believe. Did he have time to attend church? He didn't have time to do any good deeds, nor did he have any way of demonstrating his faith through his actions. He was under the sentence of death, and his hands and feet were nailed to a cross, so he couldn't do anything. We don't know how rich this man was, but he wasn't able to give everything he had to the poor. Neither was there any need for him to resolve to be good if only he could be released. He was about to breathe his last, but as he hung there on the cross,

he came to believe in Jesus. It didn't take any effort of his own.

If we read the Bible carefully, we find that it contains messages beyond anything that we might have imagined. The gospel is written out very simply and plainly, and yet many people aren't able to go to heaven because their own thoughts get in the way. There are people who have a hard time getting to heaven because they think it's difficult. It isn't difficult to go to heaven, but they think it is, and this prevents them from going. If it were difficult to go to heaven, all we would have to do is work hard at it. But since it's so simple, people tend to look for it in all the wrong places.

Let's take an example from geometry. A right angle is  $90^\circ$ . If you draw a right angle that is just one degree off—or even one tenth of a degree off—the error will become very noticeable as you extend the lines of the angle. The same is true of the gospel. Since it's so simple and easy, people ask, “Isn't there something more for me to do?” and they try

to find something to add to it. They give themselves a hard time, creating heavy burdens for themselves.

There's a story about a taxi driver who had an especially good day and earned a lot more than he had expected. He was in a very good mood and as he drove along, he decided to give a free ride to the next person who got into his taxi, whoever it might be. Then he saw an elderly lady walking along and groaning under the weight of a heavy bundle she was carrying on her head. So the taxi driver called out to her,

“Hop in, and I'll give you a ride.”

“Oh my! This is very nice of you, young man,” the lady said as she got into the taxi.

The taxi driver drove along for a while, whistling as he went, but then he heard a groan coming from the back seat. He looked behind him only to find the lady still balancing her bundle on her head.

“Why don't you put your bundle down?” he asked her.

“Oh no, I couldn’t do that! It’s enough that you’re giving me a ride. I can’t expect you to carry my bags as well!”

There are many such people among those who believe in Jesus. They think, “It’s enough that God has saved me. How could I shamelessly unload the burden of my sins before Him as well?”

### Because It Is So Easy

There are very many people in this world who are carrying their own burdens. What did Jesus say to such religious people?

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
(Matthew 11:28)

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). When the Bible says, “For God so loved the world,” how far does this “so” reach? God loved the world so much that He handed over to the world His beloved only begotten Son so that we might come to believe without any effort on our own part. He made it so easy for us to believe, but when I think of all the many people who aren’t able to go to heaven precisely because it’s so easy, it sends my head swimming.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.  
(Matthew 7:22-23)

Countless people build up their store of good deeds and enthusiasm, but in the end, God will tell them to depart from Him, and He will drive them far away.

Why do you think this is? These people will have missed one important fact, one very simple truth.

When a child is born, does it contribute to the process in any way? What does a child do as it is born from its mother's womb? Is the child's effort or strength needed? Nothing at all is required of the child, is it? The only strength that is needed is that of the mother. The child can do nothing. It may kick around a bit while it's in the womb, but it doesn't have the strength to help in the course of its own birth.

What does all this show us? God established these laws to govern the process of human birth. We also become children of God in much the same way, and the Bible tells us that this isn't possible through man's strength.

If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him?  
Or what receiveth He of thine hand? Thy  
wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and  
thy righteousness may profit the son of  
man. (Job 35:7-8)

. . . all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. . .  
(Isaiah 64:6)

Our own righteousness is like old rags. No matter how good we may be in human terms, we can't attain God's standards. Such goodness is only necessary within human society; it has nothing to do with being born into the kingdom of God. Neither human effort nor human strength is needed when an individual is born as a son of God.

## Look Unto Me

For God so loved the world, that He gave  
His only begotten Son. . . (John 3:16)

John chapter 1 verse 9 expresses this in a slightly different way:

There was the true light which, coming into  
the world, enlightens every man. (NASV)

The Son of God came into the world. Also, this light shines on each one of us individually. "The

true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man,” is given to us on an individual basis.

*There's a light in the valley of death now for me,  
Since Jesus came into my heart...<sup>1</sup>*

Let's think about this light. People inclined toward mysticism may decide that it's necessary to see a physical light since the apostle Paul also saw a light. So they go to pray in the mountains or to a prayer house. They close their eyes tight and cry out, "Lord, Lord!" and they see a sudden flash of light. They get excited and take this as an answer to their prayers. The light they've seen, however, could well have been from the headlights of a car passing at the foot of the mountain, or perhaps a firefly shimmering near their closed eyes. This isn't the kind of light that is referred to here in John's Gospel. No light, no matter how bright it may be, is of any use to our spirits without Jesus. The true light is the light of knowing Jesus Christ, the light in the heart of a person who discovers Christ.

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, some fiery serpents came out and bit those who had

spoken against God and Moses. At that time, what did God tell Moses to do? “Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole.” (Numbers 21:8)

Looking up to the bronze serpent was the only way for them to be healed. Believing also has to be this easy. It’s so simple, however, that some people have a hard time with it. If we were to analyze this cure based on our knowledge of chemistry, taking into consideration how the poison from the snake enters the body and causes the proteins in the body to coagulate, it would be difficult to believe in a cure that simply involved looking at a bronze serpent. So it is that a person may perish by depending on his own limited store of knowledge.

In the book of Isaiah there’s a verse that says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved” (45:22). It says, “Look unto me.”

There’s a story about a young man in England who was trying to make his way to church through a snowstorm one winter’s morning. It

was snowing so heavily that the road was blocked and he couldn't get to his usual place of worship, so he went into a little church that he happened to pass on the way. There were less than twenty people gathered there, and their pastor hadn't arrived yet. In his place in the pulpit stood a shabby man who looked like he might have been a tailor. He was reading from the book of Isaiah: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22), and then he kept shouting, "Look unto me!" His pronunciation wasn't even really correct and yet he repeated these words again and again:

"The Bible says, 'Look unto Me!' It doesn't hurt to look. You only have to look. Anyone can look. Look unto me! I hung on the cross. Look unto Me! I'm shedding drops of blood."

The speaker put everything he had into his sermon. The young man wondered what in the world this preacher was talking about.

“He may be uneducated,” he thought, “but how many more times is he going to repeat those words, ‘Look unto me?’”

Then, suddenly, the preacher caught the young man’s eye and shouted,

“Why are you looking at me? Look to Jesus! Look right now to Jesus who died for you!”

The young man was startled as he realized,

“Oh! That’s right! Jesus died for Me!”

At that moment, he came to believe. Later, that young man put everything he had into spreading the gospel and became a great evangelist. His name was Charles Spurgeon. Perhaps you have heard of him.

## Promised Afore Through His Prophets

There is a hymn that includes the lines,

*Son of Man, exalted High!  
Let Him in! Let Him in!*<sup>2</sup>

It says that Jesus was exalted high, and we should let Him in.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds. (Hebrews 1: 1-2)

A continuous stream of prophets wrote about Jesus.

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in

them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. (1 Peter 1:10-11)

All of this had already been recorded in the Old Testament. The Spirit of God moved the hearts of the prophets to write down all that He told them, but even as they wrote, they didn't know what it all meant. David, for example, wrote,

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring. (Psalm 22:1)

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. (Psalm 22:16)

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. (Psalm 22:18)

David had already written all of this down one thousand years before the time of Jesus. One day,

Jesus was breaking bread with His twelve disciples and as He gave a morsel to Judas, He said to him, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). Then He also said,

The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born (Matthew 26:24).

Jesus said that He was going to go the way that had been determined for Him. “I will die as it has been recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, but it would be better for that man if he had never been born.” This was because the wrath of God would extend to him. Judas ate with Jesus and the disciples and then went out. He was in charge of the moneybag, so the other disciples thought that he had gone to buy something. But Judas had gone to sell Jesus to the chief priests. The price of this sale – thirty pieces of silver – had already been recorded in the Old Testament.

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give Me My price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto Me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. (Zechariah 11:12-13)

One of Jesus' disciples betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver.

Already in Genesis chapter 3 we have a record of a prophecy about the death of Jesus. God said to the serpent, "Thou shalt bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). Also Jesus Himself said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). He was indeed lifted up and nailed to the cross. Judas Iscariot played a role in this event. The Bible also foretold the way in which Jesus would die.

[The gospel of God] which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.  
(Romans 1:2)

When it says “scriptures” here, it means the Old Testament. The promise that God made in advance through the Old Testament prophets about Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the gospel.

Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (Romans 16:25-27)

It says here that this gospel is “made known to all nations for the obedience of faith,” not just to one particular nation. The gospel is there for everyone, “whosoever believeth.”

## Wretched Man that I Am

As I read the Bible, I often consider the difference between the thoughts of man and the thoughts of God. The Bible says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Sometimes, when I see really evil characters, people who commit heinous crimes, I marvel that Jesus died even for the likes of them. Then there are those who use their writings to lure others into a clever trap, backing them into a corner from which there is no escape. This is more frightening than the threat of a nasty punch or some other physical injury. Such people appear to be respectable on the outside and yet they torment others, pinning them to the wall. No matter how carefully you may look, you won’t be able to see the evil within man, even through the lens of a microscope. Even as people smile and shake hands, their hearts are full of evil intent. This evil is invisible, but it moves into action whenever the necessity arises. It’s really strange, isn’t it?

David was a good king as well as a prophet, and yet there was still one occasion on which he committed a terrible sin. One day as he was looking down from the roof of his house, he saw a beautiful woman bathing and he summoned her to his palace. Since he was king, he could do with her as he pleased. Later, to hide his sin, he summoned the woman's husband, Uriah, from the battlefield. Uriah came, battle-weary and covered with dust. He was so faithful to his king, however, that he didn't return home, but slept at the door of the royal palace with all the other servants of the king. David panicked and tried to push Uriah to go home. Why did David behave like this? He had slept with this man's wife, and she had conceived a child. In the end, when Uriah refused to go home, David sent him to the front line of the battle so that he would be killed.

Later, David realized that he had committed a terrible sin and he wept bitterly. Psalm 51 contains David's words of repentance.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and  
renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

David's life reveals both the good and evil aspects of human nature.

Once when I turned on the television, I happened to see a movie in which the hero was a really wicked man. He took a machine gun and shot at some people, and they all fell to the ground. He just mowed them down. Later in the movie, when the police began to chase this man, however, I found myself hoping that he wouldn't get caught. I don't know where this attitude came from. It's true that the movie would have come to an end if the villain had been caught, but quite apart from that, I simply wanted him to survive to the end.

When I find myself reacting like that, I can see that there is evil inside of me as well. The apostle Paul was also aware of this evil that co-existed inside of him as he said, "O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:24). We all have this sinful nature in-

side of us, so are we in a position to be able to condemn Judas Iscariot as evil for betraying Jesus? After he betrayed Jesus, his conscience tormented him so much that he took the money he had received and threw it down in the temple. Then he went away and committed suicide by hanging himself.

When the Bible says, “that whosoever believeth,” this “whosoever” applies to everyone—all the different kinds of people that there are, including those you hate and those who hate you. Everyone is included.

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. (John 3:16)

When people begin to feel uncertain about their lives on this earth, they tend to think impulsively about life after death, imagining how peaceful everything will be then. They have an image of heaven that stems from their human desires, but such is not eternal life. People think they will go to

heaven after they die. They live for seventy, eighty, or maybe even one hundred years, but the image of heaven that they conjure up during that time, using all the powers of imagination that they have within them, will be nothing like eternal life on the level that it actually is. Eternal life can't be limited to a world of blessings and pleasures to which a person's spirit goes when his life in the flesh comes to an end.

Eternal life is nothing like that; it's given by the Spirit of God who created the heavens and the earth and it's given to everyone who believes. The Holy Spirit is eternal life, and this eternal life must enter the hearts of men.

## God So Loved the World

For God so loved the world, that He gave  
His only begotten Son.

How did God give His only begotten Son? How much did He love the world?

In observance of their Law, the Jews continued to shed the blood of an animal each time they offered a sacrifice to God. Jesus, however, fulfilled the whole of the Law as He offered His own body as the eternal sacrificial offering.

But this man, because He continueth ever,  
hath an unchangeable priesthood.  
Wherefore He is able also to save them to  
the uttermost that come unto God by Him,  
seeing He ever liveth to make intercession  
for them. (Hebrews 7:24-25)

It says here that “He ever liveth.” Even now, Jesus is at the right hand of God, making intercession for our sin. We can always confess before the Lord the sins that stain our lives from day to day, and God has promised us through the Holy Spirit that this is all we need to do. The Jews offered sacrifices continually, changing their priests time and again, but now Jesus, the eternal high priest, has dealt with our sins by offering Himself once for all. All we have to do is believe this fact.

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:25-26)

If the sacrifice of Jesus had been like that offered annually by the high priests, He would have had to die often, but this wasn't the case. In the Bible it says that He appeared as God foretold in the prophets "in these last days" (See Hebrews 1:1-2) or, as it says in the verse above, "in the end of the world." What is meant by "these last days," or "in the end of the world"? It's the time when Jesus appeared. Let's consider this matter in terms of BC and AD. For us living at the present time, the period referred to here as "in the end of the world" actually lies in the past. People who lived during the period of history BC believed in the Messiah who was to come, but we who live in the era AD believe in what the

Messiah accomplished when He came. So people who lived before Jesus came into the world looked to the future and believed, while today, we look back and believe in Christ who died in the past.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:28)

Did Jesus offer His body gradually over a long period of time, or did He offer Himself once for all? There is a verse in the Old Testament that says, “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day” (Zechariah 3:9). How many days did it take for sin to enter this world? It didn’t even take one day; sin entered in just a moment in time, the moment when Adam ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In that case, how long will it take for sin to be forgiven? When Jesus was crucified, did He say, “It is taking two or three days to finish”? No. On that day, He took upon Himself the sin of all mankind and said, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

The Bible says, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Then it also says that “unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” This is a promise that Jesus will come again later to completely transform our bodies.

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. (Hebrews 10:10, 12)

Did Christ offer a sacrifice for the sins we committed in the past, or did He offer one sacrifice for sins for all time?

*Oh love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forever more endure,  
The saints' and angels' song.*<sup>3</sup>

What kind of love is this that endures forever? It isn't the kind of love that gives salvation and then

takes it away again if we don't listen to what we are told. It's an eternal, unchanging love.

*Glory, glory! Thus I sing  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus:  
All my praise for this I bring  
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. <sup>4</sup>*

Our sins have been forgiven through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, but how far does that forgiveness go? It's eternal, but where does eternity begin and where does it end?

## He Gave His Only Begotten Son

For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds

will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:14-18)

Here it says, “For by one offering..” Who is this holy offering? It’s God’s only begotten Son, His one and only Son. It wouldn’t have been so precious if God had had several sons and said to one of them, “I want you to go into the world and be crucified, but if you don’t go, I’ll send one of your brothers.” However, God gave us His only Son. “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.

How do you think God must have felt when He gave the only Son He had? This brings to mind the time when Abraham took his son, Isaac, to Mount Moriah. Abraham set out on a journey in order to offer Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God’s command, a command that he had to obey. Abraham

wasn't young and vigorous when this son was born to him; Isaac was born when Abraham was old and his wife was already past the age of childbearing. She would have given up all hope of ever having any children, so they must have doted on this son as they were bringing him up. How must Abraham have felt when God commanded him to offer his only son as a sacrifice?

As they were on their way to Mount Moriah, Isaac said to his father,

Behold, the fire and the wood, but where  
is the lamb for the burnt offering?

Abraham couldn't bring himself to tell his son the truth, so he said,

My son, God will provide Himself a lamb  
for a burnt offering (Genesis 22:7-8).

The son simply followed his father. When they arrived at Mount Moriah, Abraham bound him tightly on the altar. Then he took out his knife, but just as

he was about to kill his son, God stopped him. It was clear that Abraham had already offered his son in his heart, so Isaac was given his life again.

In the same way, God's only Son suffered atrocious agony and death for the sake of mankind, but it was God's plan to bring His Son back to life again. He had to be brought back to life because only then would we be able to live.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:24)

Only through the death of Jesus—the “corn of wheat”—could the spirits of many be saved.

## That They Might Have Everlasting Life

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. (John 3:16)

What sort of life is this eternal life? Long ago the prophet Daniel was taken captive to Babylon where he was made an official of that country. One day while he was living there, he received a command from God.

But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days. (Daniel 12:13) NKJV

These words indicate that some day the eternal promise would be fulfilled. Daniel died in hope because of this promise that he had received from God.

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered,

every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:1-2)

God promised the many people of Old Testament times who followed His will that He would give them eternal life when this world came to an end. Then, when Jesus came to this world, He promised an entirely different eternal life to those who listened to His words.

Let's think again here about what is written in John chapter 3 verse 16. When it says "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," it means that God has forgiven us who are sinners.

*I was once a sinner, but I came  
Pardon to receive from my Lord:  
This was freely given, and I found  
That He always kept His word.*

*There's a new name written down in glory,  
And it's mine, O yes, it's mine!*<sup>5</sup>

As this hymn says, we have been pardoned for our sins. What promise has God given to us?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

(John 5:24-25)

How can the dead hear the voice of the Son of God? Common sense tells us that the nerves of the dead decompose, and there's no way that they can hear. Let's think about the words that God spoke to Adam:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in

the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:17)

This death meant the breakdown in communication between man and God. Even after Adam ate from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he lived for a very long time, didn't he? But what happened to his eyes? They became opened to the world, and he came to know that he, too, belonged to the world. Before this happened, he had belonged to Paradise. Adam and Eve were naked as they lived in the Garden of Eden, but they weren't embarrassed or ashamed. This was no problem in Paradise. Once they had eaten the forbidden fruit, however, their eyes were opened. They became aware that someone was looking at them and they became aware of themselves. On that day, mankind died to God. It's to man in this state that God has given the Bible.

## I Give Eternal Life

Why did the Jews read the Old Testament and keep its words close to their hearts for such a long time?

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. (John 5:39)

We read the Scriptures in order to receive eternal life. The Bible bears witness of Jesus, and we read it to come to know Jesus and, through Him, to receive eternal life.

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. (John 20:31)

John's Gospel, too, was recorded in order that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and receive eternal life. If we consider all 66 books of the Bible, few of them put as much emphasis on the matter of eternal life as John's Gospel does. Who is Jesus?

He is the Son of God, the Christ, or “anointed One,” promised in the Old Testament. It’s through faith in Him that we receive eternal life.

And this is life eternal, that they might know  
Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ,  
whom Thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

This promise of eternal life is so very holy! If it weren’t for this promise, what hope would there be for us in our lives?

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. (John 10:28-29)

“No man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Do you think that the devil can snatch us away? No one can snatch us away, because God is greater than all things and fills all things. Christians also must die somehow, somewhere, but all those

who have come to realize and believe that God loves them so much that He has forgiven all their sins will meet in the eternal kingdom of heaven, wherever that may be. It isn't possible for any of them to be omitted, since they have eternal life. When we drift away from God, however, when we sin or do something for which we should be disciplined and don't confess what we have done, we feel pain in our hearts.

### The Gate that Leads to Life

And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise Him up at the last day. (John 6:40)

Even though Jesus promised to raise up on the last day all those who have everlasting life, many people didn't heed His words.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (Luke 13:24)

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:22-23)

Many people will say that they did all kinds of work for God while living in this world, and yet God will say to them, “I never knew you,” because they have rejected His will. A person must first receive eternal life and then he can walk with God.

The Holy Spirit brings us to realize that Jesus is our Savior and that He has forgiven our sins for all time. Since we have received God’s love, when we

have fellowship with other believers, we understand each other's hearts. When we hear someone else's testimony of salvation, we can identify with them, and hymns that were once meaningless to us now become our very own.

Who makes all of this possible? It's the work of the Holy Spirit of God, and it's very important to ask yourself whether you are part of this work. If not, you could be one of those who, on the last day, are addressed with the words, "I never knew you." Religious activities may be necessary in human society, but they are of no use at all when we stand before God.

### He that Believeth Hath Everlasting Life

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. (John 6:47)

Does it say in this verse that he who believes *will have* everlasting life, or *has* everlasting life?

Jesus, the Son of God, was born without sin to the virgin Mary and He was crucified and died for your sin and mine. God gave us Jesus as a gift in order that He would provide forgiveness for the sins of the whole world. If my sins are included and I myself am included, then I have been crucified with Christ.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

When was I crucified with Christ?

On the day that Adam sinned, we were already in his body, and God knew that we would be born as sinners. So God promised that He would send His Son into the world for the sake of sinners such as we are. This promise is the Old Testament. Jesus died to atone for Adam's sin. We were born into the world clothed in Adam's body, and since Jesus died in Adam's place, we also died with Him.

*Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine.* <sup>6</sup>

If it weren't for this principle, if we, as individuals, hadn't died with Jesus when He was crucified, everyone who sings this hymn would be deceiving himself.

We are people who have received many blessings, or perhaps I should say we have met with blessings. This world is full of blessings. Every time you sneeze someone blesses you. Nevertheless, there are many people who have yet to receive the true blessing, the blessing freely given to us by God's command. What is God's command? There's a hymn I used to sing parrot-fashion when I was a young boy, completely oblivious to what it was all about:

*On us has fallen God's clear command:  
In this garden land let us go labor!* <sup>7</sup>

## His Commandment Is Life Everlasting

For a long time I lived my life ignorant of God's commandment, but one day as I was reading through John's Gospel, I came across these words of Jesus:

And I know that His commandment is life everlasting (John 12:50).

God's commandment is that we should receive eternal life. This eternal life has been given to me in return for nothing! I was really elated when I thought about it in this way. The Bible says that "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein"(Mark 10:15). Receiving eternal life is really very simple.

For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever

I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak. (John 12:49-50)

Jesus didn't make up the words He spoke to us; He received the commandments of God and passed them on to us. Did Jesus tell us to be diligent in keeping the Law? Did He command us to attend church regularly? It isn't a question of belonging to a certain Christian denomination; all that matters is that we believe. The important point is that God's commandment is eternal life.

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. (John 3:16)

There's a world of difference between God's having given something to us and our trying to give something to God. What can we possibly give to God? All that remains for us to do is simply place our faith in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. We need only relax and put our trust in Him.

One episode from a book I read a long time ago has remained in my memory. There was a mother who had lost her son, her only child. She used every penny she had in her attempt to find him. She put out announcements on the radio and advertisements in the newspapers, but it was all to no avail. When all her money had run out, she began to search for her son on foot. Then after several years like this, she was walking through a poverty-stricken neighborhood one day when she noticed a child who looked just like her son. His face was filthy, his clothes were in rags, and his skin had broken out in sores, but it was definitely her son. What would the boy's mother have said?

“My son! Do you know how long I've been looking for you? Come on, let's go home.”

Suppose the son had then replied,

“Mom. I can't go home like this. I'm too dirty. Let me first earn some money, take a bath, and get some new clothes, and then I'll come.”

How would the mother have felt? Do these words indicate that the son knows what is in his mother's

heart? If he had still been a young child and hadn't grown up yet, he probably would have simply run to his mother's arms and wept for joy. Since he had grown up a little, however, he would be concerned about such irrelevant matters and probably say something like,

“Just look at me. Look at the state I'm in!”

Is there any need for us to weigh our circumstances when we turn to God?

*Come home! Come home!  
You are weary at heart.* <sup>8</sup>

In Luke's Gospel we find the parable of the prodigal son. There was a man who had two sons. One day the younger son approached his father and asked for his share of the family fortune. He then took what was given to him and left for a distant land where he lived a life of dissipation. When he had used up all his money in this way, he found a job looking after pigs. He was so hungry that he longed even to eat the pods that were given to the swine,

but there was no one who fed him. He would even have eaten the slightly rotten fruit from the pigs' swill, if he could have. So he began to think,

“In my father's house the hired men have more than enough to eat, but here I am dying of hunger. Wouldn't I be better off if I returned to my father and asked him to use me as one of his hired men? Then at least I would have plenty to eat.”

So he set off for home. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and came running to him. The father embraced his son and rejoiced, saying, “My son was dead but now he's alive again.”

Then there's the story of a woman who had ten silver coins, but she lost one of them. She turned her house upside down as she searched carefully in every corner until she found it. Then she was so happy that she called together her friends and neighbors to celebrate with her.

There's also the parable of a shepherd who had one hundred sheep and lost one of them. So he left the

ninety-nine sheep and went in search of the one that was lost. When he found it, he brought it home rejoicing and held a feast with his friends to celebrate.

As Jesus told this parable, He said,

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance (Luke 15:7).

There's a common thread that runs through all of these parables. Did the younger son return to his father expecting to be taken back as a son? He was even prepared to work as a servant. But how did the father greet his son? He didn't receive him as a servant but as the son he had lost.

The father found his son, the woman found her silver coin, and who found the lost sheep? It was the shepherd. All power and authority lies in God's hands. Before God, we too were lost but have been found again. It isn't that we have found God, but He has found us.

## The Son Did Not Come to Condemn the World

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:17)

From this verse we can see that God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn it. The Son didn't come to rebuke or condemn mankind. God's purpose in sending His Son into the world was to provide salvation through Jesus for all the people in the world.

He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but He that believeth not is condemned already, because He hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

A person who believes isn't condemned, but a person who doesn't believe has already been condemned. No one under God's condemnation can enter the kingdom of heaven even if he performs

good deeds. It's after faith comes that good deeds are necessary.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)

When it says here that “men loved darkness rather than light,” it means that they are more attached to the things of this world. They are more involved in the things of this world and are more interested in this sinful world. In the parable of the prodigal son, what happened to the younger son? He had a complete change of heart as he realized that he would die of hunger if he carried on the way he was going. All that a person can do is turn around. That is repentance. It's all too easy to think, “All my life I've lived just as I pleased. Maybe it's time I started going to church,” and to make this the first step to a reformed life. This isn't, however, what is meant by repentance.

*I'm believing and receiving  
While I to the fountain go;  
And my heart the waves are cleansing  
Whiter than the driven snow.*<sup>9</sup>

The faith that we come to know at that moment—the faith that enables us to entrust everything to God—this faith is all-important. Entrusting everything to God is what is meant by receiving the light. In the world of nature, there are bugs and winged insects that come thronging to the light. There appears to be a lesson for us to learn from this. Going to heaven is a matter of abiding in the light.

*Walking in sunlight all of my journey,  
Over the mountains, through the deep vale,  
Jesus has said, "I'll never forsake thee."  
Promise divine that never can fail.*<sup>10</sup>

Jesus was “the true Light, which lighteth every man” (John 1:9). The moment we entrust ourselves to this true light, we are born anew as children of God.

## He That Doeth Truth Cometh to the Light

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:20-21)

Let's consider the relationship between parents and children. When a child does something wrong, if he admits to his parents what he has done and asks to be forgiven, in most cases the parents will forgive him. Even if the child has deceived his parents several times, if he is sorry and admits his fault, his parents can't help but forgive him. In spite of their children's mistakes and wrongdoings, parents have a love for them that can't be measured with money or other material goods. Doesn't everything else dissolve before this love?

There is a verse in the Bible that says,

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

In a way, this is similar to the love that parents have for their children. We were burdened every day by our sins. Our wrongdoings followed us everywhere, but then we were given a new strength. This strength is the light before which all sins dissolve. This happens in God, in the light. When the child of a household does something wrong, the situation is different from when a servant does something wrong. Isn't it only natural for parents to forgive their child when he confesses his misdeeds? If there is still something in our hearts that constrains us, all we can do is confess it before God.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered. (Psalm 32:1)

I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. (Psalm 32:5)

What amazing words of blessing these are! I confessed all my sins before the Lord and He forgave me. He has pardoned me.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10)

These verses apply to those who have received eternal life. They have been given to us because they address a problem that arises in the lives of people who firmly believe that their sins have been forgiven. If we confess our wrongdoings and the sins that taint our daily lives, God will forgive us.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the

propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

He died not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:21)

Everything is forgiven that is wrought in God. Also, anyone who has not yet received forgiveness can be pardoned for all his sins when he comes to know the love of God. We believe the fact that Jesus accomplished all things on the cross where He was sacrificed as the peace offering for our sins. The moment we come to this belief, we receive peace in our hearts.

## Herein Is Love

Not only has God given us rest, but His heart is also at rest because we were lost, but now we have been found.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)

We often refer to the words that people say as “real gems,” but are there any words more like a precious gem than these? God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live eternally. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” There’s a hymn that says something similar to this:

*I've found a Friend, oh, such a Friend!  
He loved me 'ere I knew Him;*

*He drew me with the cords of love,  
And thus He bound me to Him. <sup>11</sup>*

This is the faith by which we live. There's also a hymn that includes the following lines:

*Let mock who may the way that you are taking,  
Be we but witnesses, confident and true. <sup>12</sup>*

Wherein lies the confidence of a believer regarding his faith? If you ask someone who claims to believe, "How can you be so sure?" there will be some who will answer, "I have spoken in tongues," or "I have prophesied." But this isn't the reason for our confidence. Neither is healing the sick evidence of faith. What is the evidence on which our faith is founded? First and foremost, it's the conviction that comes to the individual when he realizes that it was for his sins that Jesus, the Son of God, was crucified, died, was buried, and three days later rose from the dead.

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the

witness of God which He hath testified of  
His Son. (1 John 5:9)

The witness of God is greater than any witness  
that man can give. Let's take a look at what this  
witness of God is.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath  
the witness in Himself: he that believeth  
not God hath made Him a liar; because he  
believeth not the record that God gave of  
His Son. (1 John 5:10)

Anyone who believes in God has the witness inside  
him. What is this witness? It is the belief that Jesus  
died for me, providing me with eternal redemption.  
Anyone who doesn't have this conviction doesn't  
believe, even though God has provided His witness.  
People who don't believe have the power to reject  
this witness, thinking, "God lied. His Son didn't die  
for me." Those who believe, however, have the wit-  
ness in themselves and so they don't make God out  
to be a liar. What is it that bears witness to the Son of  
God? It's faith in the fact that He died for my sins.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:11-12)

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Here we can see that there are those who have the Son and those who don’t. Think about your own position. To which of these two categories do you belong?

### These Things I Have Written

This faith gives us a certain comfort as we live our lives in this world. Even though we suffer, things don’t seem so bad. When you lose something, it doesn’t seem such a great loss. Perhaps you have experienced this. Your heart is at peace, so you just take things as they come. Even though things may be difficult, it’s better to live like this. How could we live in the world, if we didn’t have this faith? If

we didn't have this conviction in our hearts, our lives would be pointless.

Why were we born? To breathe? To eat and drink? To wear nice clothes? To live somewhere a bit better than a hole in the wall? And after we die, is this all that will be written on our gravestones: "He ate, he lived, and he died"? Is this all we are living for? Our lives on this earth may be short and humble, but we were born into this world in order to receive eternal life. We live with the hope that God's commandment will come upon us and when it does, we receive eternal life and go to stand before God.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.  
(1 John 5:13)

Even when things are explained clearly like this, there are still people who can't believe. It's a really big problem when someone hears this message and still says that he has no idea what it all means. It

says here, “These things have I written unto you...that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”

Let’s turn to John chapter 3 verse 21.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light,  
that his deeds may be made manifest, that  
they are wrought in God.

This verse is talking about the actions that are carried out in the eternal God. Even people who have lived very sinful lives know that they are forgiven once they are in God. A person who believes the truth knows that he has received eternal life.

He that believeth on the Son hath  
everlasting life: and he that believeth not the  
Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God  
abideth on him. (John 3:36)

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”  
What does it mean to obey? Does obedience require the performing of good deeds? Or does it require faith? People standing under a roof don’t

get wet from the rain. A person who stands under a roof in the rain, but still puts up his umbrella just because it's new is a fool. As long as you are under the roof, you don't have to worry, because the rain will fall on the roof and not on you. In much the same way, there is Someone who has taken our place and received the judgment that should have fallen on us. Jesus has taken our place and we are protected under Him.

*The trusting heart to Jesus clings,  
Nor any ill forebodes,  
But at the cross of Calvary sings,  
“Praise God for lifted loads!”*

*Singing I go along life's road,  
Praising the Lord, praising the Lord;  
Singing I go along life's road,  
For Jesus has lifted my load. <sup>13</sup>*

“But at the cross of Calvary sings, ‘Praise God for lifted loads!’” This is quite amazing, isn't it? What would have become of us if it hadn't been for the

cross of Jesus? If we hadn't been able to lay our burdens down at the foot of the cross and we were still carrying them around, how would we be able to endure such affliction?

Fortunately, we have Someone who has lifted our loads and taken them upon Himself. Our burdens have been lifted before His cross. He has taken all our sins upon Himself and we need only believe this fact in our hearts.

“Oh, I see! He has lifted my load!”

### There Is a Difference in the Way We Sing Hymns

Have you ever noticed a difference in the way you sing hymns now that you have come to believe in Jesus and the way you used to sing them?

*Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art calling,  
Do not pass me by.* <sup>14</sup>

Perhaps you sang this hymn before you came to believe, and then there are the hymns we sing after we have come to believe.

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine.  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.  
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*

*I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death;  
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;  
And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.<sup>15</sup>*

This is a hymn that looks to eternity. There is a clear distinction between hymns and other songs. In the past when I had no idea what the words of hymns were talking about, they didn't seem to differ very much from any other songs, and they even seemed rather corny. My opinion changed, however, once I came to a definite realization of the love of God. There is a huge difference between hymns and the songs of this world.

*Once I was bound in the grip of all my sins* <sup>16</sup>

Originally there were very different words set to this music:

*Gone are the days when my heart was young and gay,  
Gone are my friends from the cotton fields away,  
Gone from the earth to a better land I know,  
I hear their gentle voices calling, "Old Black Joe."*

*Why do I weep, when my heart should feel no pain,  
Why do I sigh that my friends come not again.* <sup>17</sup>

Whenever I sang this song, my heart would be drawn into the nostalgia of it. Such feelings used to preoccupy my heart, but now everything has changed.

*Once I was bound in the grip of all my sins,  
But then my Savior came and set me free.  
Although my sins were red as crimson bright,  
The blood of my dear Lord has washed them snowy white.*

*I've cast aside all vain glory of the world  
And through God's grace many blessings now are mine.  
I give my heart and my body to the Lord,  
And serve Him in the glory of His heavenly home.*

*Jesus Lord, Savior dear, for the sake of all my sins  
Was crucified and died upon the rugged cross.*<sup>18</sup>

There's a world of difference between the two versions, isn't there? The original song expresses a longing for this world, a desire to see the people who are missed and are far away. By contrast to this, the hymn talks of discarding vain glory. It tells how the fleeting things of this world will all disappear and how we have received many blessings through the grace of the Lord. The difference is that once we were in darkness but now we have come to see a brilliant light.

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. (John 3:16)

This precious verse can be seen as representative of the whole Bible. If it weren't for the truth proclaimed here, there would be no way for us to be saved. Jesus came to this world in order to offer His body as a sacrifice. God gave His only begotten Son

for the sake of our sins. He prepared one eternal offering, Jesus, to keep us from being cast into hell. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, He took upon Himself all of our sins. Then in order that we might live eternally, He rose from the dead. Some day our bodies will be changed to be like that of Jesus after His resurrection. He will return and we will be clothed in bodies of eternal life.

*About the Author:*

I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

- Acts 20:33-34 -

These were the words of the apostle Paul as he spoke to the elders of the Ephesian church. This has also been the attitude of Byung Eun Yoo since he first began to live for the sake of the gospel in 1961. For more than forty years he has worked as an inventor and businessman to support the spreading of the gospel all over the world.

In recent years his weekly sermons have taken his listeners through Matthew's Gospel, John's Gospel, the Book of Acts, and the Letter to the Romans, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. He has preached powerful sermons in Korea, Germany, and the United States, and he has given his full support to the work of spreading the gospel in countries all over the world. His sermons

and books have already been translated into ten different languages.

Even as he now approaches the autumn of his life, he continues to work for the sake of the gospel with the same energy as he had in his younger days and with the same firm belief that this is a message that everyone needs to hear.

*Other books by the author:*

God So Loved (I)

The Anchor of the Soul

As the Father Hath Loved Me

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