

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

This text is often preached on Christmas Day. But since I won't be here to celebrate Christmas Day with you, I decided to use this text for the basis of the message today.

I also chose this verse from John's Gospel, because John speaks of "love" more often than Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined. Not only that, but in his First Epistle, which we began studying in Bible Class last Sunday, John speaks of love 46 times! He even calls himself, "*The disciple whom Jesus loved.*"

No man knows more about God's "love" than John. In our text he records Jesus' own words about God's love –

### **"The Love that Brings Salvation, Not Slavation"**

I.

It has happened more than once that when I type the word, "*salvation,*" my laptop screen shows "*slavation.*" Why is that? Because my fingers put the "L" in the wrong place.

**The letter "L" is important if we are to understand "salvation."**

The letter "L" begins the word "*love;*" and "*love's*" place definitely has something to do with our salvation. **But where does love fit?** Everyone will agree at Christmas that the scene of Jesus in the manger shows *God's love*. However, many do not understand **how God's love saves sinners.**

Many believe that God **showed** His love by sending His perfect Son at Christmas, Who would show us by His example **how to love** others and **earn** salvation. Those who believe this have transposed the "L" of **salvation** into "*slavation.*" They have **ENslaved** themselves to **works of love** to **earn** God's love!

II.

**But our text shows that God's love is God's gift!** John records Jesus' own words "**God SO loved the world.**" Make no mistake:

This was not a lovable, friendly world! This is the world of man who had hardly lived before he died by his own rebellious hand in the Garden!

This is the world that had already been destroyed by a universal flood because of its sins. This is the world where the Jews killed the prophets He sent to them, and the non-Jews "sat in gross darkness!" This is a world being nursed by the Devil, a world so blind that it did not know its Maker when He came to them! This is like saying that "*God SO loved those who mocked him, hated him, killed his people, and kept trying to kill him!*" This is like saying that God "**SO loved a pile of cow manure!**"

**"GOD SO LOVED"** means the exact **opposite** of "*God found the world loveable.*" "**Love**" is a Greek verb describing God's **will in action** to save a world that despises His love because it loves itself!

So, how does God's love go about saving a world that despises His love? "**He gave,**" Jesus says. He does NOT say that God **SENT** His Son to the world. God did not merely send

an example of His love; He **“gave Him up” – surrendered Him to the enemy!** God gave up His eternal Son to His great enemy, so that the old Serpent, Satan, might **“bruise the heel”** of the woman’s Seed – *Jesus in the flesh!*

Paul says in Romans 8:32 that God did **“not spare Him.”** Because God **gave up** His Son, Jesus would later call His suffering and death on the cross, **“the cup which My Father has given Me to drink.”** (John 18:11) When Jesus cried out from the cross, **“My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me,”** He was giving the most powerful testimony that God **SO** loved the world that *He gave up* – **“forsook”** – His only begotten, eternal Son to suffer the eternal death of Hell die on the cross for the sins of the world!

If it had been God’s purpose to **enslave** mankind to the Law of Love, He would not have **given love** in the person and work of His eternal Son. He might have commanded everyone else to simply follow His **example of love.** Instead, God **gave love itself in giving up** His Son in our places and for our sins! The **gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation,** *because by this means alone God gives His love – not “slavation,” but salvation!*

### III.

For this reason **God’s gift of love is the promise of life!** – **Not the promise of “a way of life, to be lived to please God,” but life itself!** Wasn’t that the promise God made to our first parents who died in the Garden of Eden? What did God say? He promised that **“the Seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan”** who had brought death to mankind!

Consider the words of our text, **“should not perish.”** The Son of Man was **given** to save men’s lives by the love that put Him on the cross for our sins! – Not perish like the old world in the days of the flood, but have life, like Noah. Not perish like the foolish builder on sand, but have life, like the wise man who built on a rock. Not perish like the foolish rich man, but have life, like that beggar Lazarus. Not perish like the devil, but have everlasting life, like Christ.

Now consider the word, **“whosoever.”** Who are **whosoevers?** **EVERY man, woman, and child,** regardless of our past sins, our color, where we live or where we came from! As the Apostle Paul put it: **“God, our Savior, desires all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** – 2Tim. 2:4 ff. Then Jesus adds a word to **“whosoever.** He says: **“whosoever believes.”** **“Slavation”** belongs to him who **works**; but **salvation** belongs to **whosoever believes!**

Does this mean that believing in **just anything** brings us **life?** Hardly! For Jesus says, **“whosoever believes IN HIM shall not perish.”** Salvation from sin is not in **the act of believing as a DEED, but in the WHAT we believe – our CREED!**

In 2011, After the Denver Broncos won in overtime against the Chicago Bears, their quarterback, Tim Tebow, was asked how they could keep coming from behind in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter to win games. **“We believe!”** he said. **“This is a team that believes, no matter what!”**

Many people will tell you that they **“believe”** they are going to be saved and live before God in heaven. But If you ask **“Why” or “What”** they believe, they may answer, **“because I love God and try to keep His commandments.”** Those who believe this have **“slavation,”** not salvation!

Because by nature every human being is **“dead in trespasses and sins,”** salvation is **“the gift of God, not of works,”** as Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians. Paul says: **“By grace you have been saved.”** (Eph. 2:8-10) Again Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome that **“God has shown His love toward us, in that when we were (His) ungodly enemies” – when we were “without strength” of our own, God gave up His Son for us!**

That Silent, Holy night was indeed a **displaying of God’s Love – His free gift of love and the promise of life!** This was a *Silent, holy night*, because the *“radiant beams from the face of God’s Son did NOT show the law of love, but “the dawn of redeeming GRACE!”* And **“WHOSOEVER believes IN HIM shall not perish, but have everlasting life!”** Amen.