

**GOD'S ELECTION IN
JOHN 3:16**

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GOD'S SOVEREIGN LOVE

I want to bring you a series of Bible studies on one of the strangest and most misunderstood texts, I believe, of the entire Bible. You will find it in John 3:16, "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE."

This is one of the greatest texts of the entire Bible, and yet one of the most misunderstood texts, as well as one of the most misemphasized texts. The average individual's mind runs in a certain groove when he reads it or quotes it, and therefore he emphasizes the text incorrectly and destroys its great meaning. It has been so used by the average Arminian, or freewillier, to try to oppose and combat God's sovereign, elective grace until the deep meaning of the text has literally been destroyed and in thousands of instances the minds of people have been prejudiced against it. So today IN THE AVERAGE RELIGIOUS CIRCLE THIS GREAT, GRACIOUS, MAGNIFICENT TEXT HAS LITERALLY BEEN BURIED UNDER THE RUBBISH OF FALSE DOCTRINE. I am challenging every radio listener to hear me as by the grace of God we place it in its proper setting

among the gems of Scripture where it sparkles with the diamonds of grace, with the gold of deity, with the silver of redemption in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This text naturally falls into four great divisions:

1. GOD'S SOVEREIGN LOVE - "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."
2. THE BONDAGE OF THE SINNER'S WILL "whosoever believeth in him (Christ)."
3. THE LOST SINNER - "should not perish."
4. ETERNAL LIFE - "but have everlasting life."

Our subject today is, "GOD'S SOVEREIGN LOVE." John 3:16 sets forth Christ as the Gift of God, which is the manifestation of His great love. It says, "God so loved... that he gave." So the first clause tells us WHAT moved God to give His only begotten Son, and that was HIS GREAT SOVEREIGN LOVE. Then we see the second clause tells us FOR WHOM God gave His Son, and that is for "WHOSOEVER" (or a better translation, everyone) "THAT BELIEVETH." Then we see as we look more closely at the text that the last clause tells us WHY God gave His Son -that is, the purpose for which He gave His Son - THAT EVERYONE THAT BELIEVETH SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." Let's keep these great truths in mind as we move along with our subject today. "The Sovereign Love of God," and also the great fact - WHOM God loves.

The Word of God sets forth the nature of God that God is love (1 John 4:8),

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for GOD IS LOVE."

It doesn't say, "God loves," but, "God is love. He is love itself. All through the Scriptures we find set forth God's love which is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature. Listen to Jer. 31:3,

"Yea, I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING LOVE: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Hos. 14:4 says, "I will love them freely," which means God finds nothing in the sinner to attract His love. He loves them without a cause, because God is love. Then John 11:3, speaking of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, says, "Lord, behold, -HE WHOM THOU LOVEST is sick." We see here the great loving heart of the Lord for His people.

Further, we find this love expressed in John 15:13,

"GREATER LOVE hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Then Christ went on to say in the next verse, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Here Christ speaks of His love for His friends, who are HIS PEOPLE.

Then Rom. 5:8 says,

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Here again we see God's love manifested toward His children through Christ Jesus our Lord. Also we find in II Cor. 5:14 that it is the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5) that constraineth us. We are led captive by His love. Then speaking of God's relationship to His people II Cor. 13:11 says,

"And the God of love and peace shall be with you."

These Scriptures definitely emphasize GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE. This truth is also brought out in Eph. 3:19,

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

Let's turn to Rom. 5:5, and we find HOW GOD LOVES US -

we are."

Also in the 24th verse we find that same truth,

"WHOM THOU HAST GIVEN ME.

In other words, God's children are those whom the Father gave to Christ back in the eternities. Those are the ones for whom Christ died; those are the ones whom the Holy Spirit will call, because God has chosen them, and did not leave the choice to the sinner.

The only manifestation we have that they are God's children, the ones whom He gave to Christ, is that they will believe the Word of God, and the Word of God will come home to their hearts in power and much assurance, and they will answer the call of God to come to Christ. They will bow in obedience to the Word, believing the Word, and then bow in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Now you want to know if you are elected, here is the evidence: - that THE WORD OF GOD COMES HOME TO YOUR HEART IN POWER, breaks your will, and brings you in obedience to that Word and to the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, that is the evidence of election. As long as you stand up and argue with God's Word, and argue about the Lordship of Christ, you are not saved, and never will be! You will go to hell for your trouble. That's right! But the outstanding evidence of one of God's elect is that the individual will bow in obedience to the Word, the Bible, the Word of God, and in obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I do not know who God's children are until I hear them begin to cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," because ALL GOD'S CHILDREN ARE CRIERS. When I see a poor lost sinner, whether he is in the pulpit, the pew, or the world, bowing in obedience unto the Word, crying out unto the Lord Jesus Christ, "I'm lost I'm lost! God be merciful to me the sinner," then I know he is one of God's children. Somewhere down the line that sinner will throw up his hands in absolute surrender to the power of the engrafted Word in obedience to Christ, the living Word, and will cry, "Lord, save me or perish! Lord, do with me as Thou seest best. Do with me as Thou wilt." To that individual God gives eternal life, because back in eternity He purposed and ordained and promised, and now gives, and the believer now has, eternal life. I want to tell you, my friend, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY OF SALVATION SET FORTH IN GOD'S WORD, and no other way of obtaining eternal life in Christ, except as a gift from a sovereign God. Christ is the gift of God to His children, and God's chosen or elect are God's gift to Christ.

"Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

In Gal.5:22 we find that the love of God is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the born again believer. This great truth is set forth also in Rev.1:5 in these words, "Unto him that loved (loved) us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." This shows that God has always loved His people and will continue to love His people.

You will notice, my friend, that all these Scriptures I have quoted have to do with God loving HIS PEOPLE. There is a popular belief abroad in the land today, and that is, THAT GOD LOVES EVERYBODY. There is no such doctrine taught in God's Word. This teaching is so popular among all classes that it ought to arouse the suspicion of everyone who loves the eternal truth of God's Word. This doctrine that God loves everybody is a modern belief. You will not find such a doctrine taught in God's Word or among the old church fathers, the Reformers, or the Puritans.

Many will modify the above statement by saying that God loves the sinner but hates his sins. This states nothing at all, because the sinner is sin himself. The above false statement is born in the heart and mind of an individual that knows nothing of the total depravity of the human heart. Everyone quoting the above statement will call your attention to Rom.5:8, which reads thus, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

I want you to notice that word, "US," in this Scripture does not refer to all sinners, but only to those who have come to know Christ as their Lord and Saviour, those who are God's elect. Nowhere in the Scripture is it taught that God loves everybody.

THE BONDAGE OF THE SINNER'S WILL

In our first study on the great text, John 3:16, we showed to you the sovereignty of God's love. God is love; therefore, He does not love by rule or by law. He is a law unto Himself. Therefore, GOD LOVES WHOMSOEVER HE WILL, and has mercy on whomsoever He will. Let's never get away from the great fact of the sovereignty of God, which is the basic foundation teaching of the entire Bible.

Our subject today in our second study of John 3:16 is, "THE BONDAGE OF THE SINNER'S WILL." Now let's read John 3:16 again, "For God so loved the world (the world of believers), that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let's read this same text from the Amplified New Testament. Listen closely,

"For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that he [even] gave up his

fact: that God is unchangeable, and He cannot lie regarding His covenant with His people and the promises which support the covenant. GOD PURPOSED and GOD PROMISED to give eternal life to His people in Christ Jesus.

Then, in the third place, GOD GIVES ETERNAL LIFE TO HIS CHILDREN. Christ speaking in John 10:27,28 says,

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

Then in that great prayer in the 17th chapter of John, in the second verse, Christ utters these immortal words,

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he SHOULD GIVE eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

In Rom.6:23 we find these words,

"But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So we see that God purposed, God ordained, God promised, and God gives eternal life to all His children in Christ. Let's not forget this one thing, that CHRIST IS THE BELIEVER'S SALVATION, and He is the gift of God unto His children. Christ brought this great truth out in John 4:10 as He talked to the woman at Jacob's well,

"if thou knewest the gift of God,, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

That Living Water is Christ Himself. It is Christ who lives within the heart of the believer that is the Hope of glory and the Well of Water springing up into eternal life.

Then we come to face this fact, that what God purposed, ordained, promised, and gives - that is, eternal life - THE BELIEVER HAS. God sets forth this truth in I John 5:11,

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

He clinches it with this great truth found in John 3:36), "He that believeth on the Son HATH (hath right now!) EVERLASTING (eternal) LIFE," and He makes it sure in our text, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting (eternal) life."

The believer has eternal life now - not when he dies, but NOW! The life that God purposed and promised and gives, the believer has in Christ, and it is experimental to him. The believer lives with the consciousness that he knows whom he has believed, and he knows that he has in Christ eternal life, and shall never perish, nor ever be lost world without end.

You may want to raise this question in the face of the fact that I keep referring to God's children, "WHO ARE GOD'S CHILDREN?" Christ plainly tells us who they are in the 17th chapter of John in that great priestly prayer. In the 6th verse He states it thus, "I have manifested thy name unto the MEN WHICH THOU GAVEST ME out of the world."

Then in the 8th verse He says,

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me."

Again in the 9th verse He puts it in these words,

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for THEM WHICH THOU HAST GIVEN ME; for they are thine."

In the 11th verse He again states who God's children are, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name THOSE WHOM THOU HAST GIVEN ME, that they may be one, as

foreseeing that no sinner, left to himself, would choose Christ, made the choice for us. PRAISE THE LORD! MY HEART NEVER CEASES TO REJOICE IN CHRIST THAT GOD MADE THE CHOICE FOR ME. Day by day I rejoice that He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world, and He elected me to eternal life according to His purpose in Christ Jesus our Lord according to His will.

This great truth is expressed in Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as WERE ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE believed." Every effort in the world has been used by you free-willers to explain away that verse of Scripture, but in spite of all your comment, or evasion, or trying to explain away, it still stands as a Rock of Gibraltar - unmoveable.

"And as many as were ORDAINED to eternal life believed."
Ordained to eternal life comes before believing. In other words, back in the eternities God made a choice, and that choice was based upon His foreknowledge (1 Pet.1:2). Therefore, those whom He elected He predestinated in love unto "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5).

God foreknew us; God elected us; God predestinated us and all of this in love, according to His purpose, for He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa.46:10). In other words, God consulted no one but Himself in making the choice of those who were to become members of His family and be conformed to the image of His Son. Therefore, we see that our salvation dates back to the purpose of God before the foundation of the world, and can rightly be called, "eternal life in Christ," Brother, if it didn't, it wouldn't be eternal!

Not only did God purpose and ordain to give us eternal life in Christ, but HE PROMISED TO GIVE US ETERNAL LIFE, according to Tit.1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

In other words, the salvation of every one of God's children is based, not only upon the purpose of God, but upon the promise of God from eternity. This truth is also brought out in I John 2:25, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." This great promise is based upon the will of a sovereign eternal God who cannot lie,

"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew Unto the heirs of promise the immutability (unchangeableness) of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable (or unchangeable) things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation (encouragement), who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus; made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6 :17-20).

You see, all of God's purposes, decrees and promises are based upon this eternal

only begotten [unique] Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts, clings to, relies on) Him may not perish - come to destruction, be lost - but have eternal (everlasting) life." I read this version to you to bring to your attention what the word, "BELIEVE," means. It is not a faith or belief in a fact, or a feeling, or an experience, or a dream, or some emotion, or some set of rules or doctrines. It is not even a belief in the Scriptures or the Bible: it is a belief or faith in Him, Christ. And so the word, "believe," means to trust or cling to or rely on, and the object is a Person, and that Person is Christ. The reason so many go astray on this great gem of God's Word is because they fail to realize that THE OBJECT OF OUR FAITH IS A PERSON - that is, CHRIST.

Now let's look at that word, "WHOSOEVER." It means anyone. So it could be read like this, "Anyone who trusts in Christ, or clings to Christ, or relies on Christ, never perishes, is never lost, never comes to destruction, but has eternal life." It does not say here, "Whosoever will," but, "Anyone who believes in Christ, " or relies on Christ or clings to Christ. It doesn't say, "Whosoever believes in feelings, or feels like he is saved." It doesn't say, "Whosoever believes in an experience, or has an experience." It doesn't say, "Whosoever believes in certain doctrines." It doesn't say, "Whosoever believes in the church, or is a member of the church, or is baptized, or keeps the sabbath, or lives the best he can." The Scripture states a positive, definite, absolute fact, and that is, that anyone who trusts in or relies on or clings to Christ is saved.

SALVATION IS BELIEVING OR CLINGING TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND HIM ALONE. As some old divine has said, "If there is one hair's breadth of works in any form in your so-called salvation, you are not saved." Therefore, salvation is of the Lord (Jon.2:9). Now you face this question, my friend, Are you clinging only to Christ? Are you relying only on Christ? Now why is it that you do not trust Christ. You can trust a feeling, or believe a feeling because it's tangible. You can believe an experience of some type that you have had because that is a living reality. You can believe in a fact that Christ is a historical character - you may believe that He is the Son of God, but you have never come to cling to Him and to rely upon Him wholly and completely as your Lord and your Saviour. You can believe some promise as a historical fact; you can believe the Bible is the Word of God based upon what others have told you, but that is not salvation. Salvation is believing Christ and Him alone. Any sinner who clings to

Christ, relies upon Christ, cannot go to hell. NEVER!

Now the reason that you do not believe Christ is because you cannot. Now that may startle you, but listen: YOU CANNOT BELIEVE CHRIST, and the reason you cannot is that YOUR WILL IS HELD IN BONDAGE by the power of your depraved affections which control your will. As we said, the first thing that we find in this great text is that God is sovereign in His love; the reason for it is because He is God, and because man is totally depraved. Man is enmity against God; he is not subject to the law of God, and cannot be, according to Rom.8:7. Christ explains this great fact in John 3:19, after He has said in the 18th verse that man is condemned for refusing to let his trust rest in Christ's name only. He says that the basis of this judgment or indictment, or the ground for this sentence of death, lies in this fact, that the Light, Christ, is come into the world, and you love darkness (or sin) rather than (or more than) Light (Christ), for your deeds (or works) are evil.

We might go further and say you don't even love the Light (Christ); there is no love in your heart for Christ - never has been, never will be, until God plants it there by His Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Christ goes on to say in the 20th verse of John 3 that every sin-

ner hates, or loathes, or detests Christ, and will not come unto Christ, lest his whole inner life be exposed and he be convicted of his wrongdoings. By nature YOU WON'T COME to Christ. You don't want Christ. BY NATURE YOU HATE CHRIST. By nature you are going away from Christ. These are facts that every sinner has to face.

Now the question arises, "WHY WON'T MAN COME TO CHRIST? Why won't man trust Christ?" The soul of every individual is possessed with three great powers - first, THE INTELLECT, or the power of seeing or knowing; second, THE POWER OF AFFECTION OR FEELING; and, third, THE POWER OF VOLITION, OR THE WILL. Then when we study fallen man closely, we find that the will of every man by nature is not independent, but is dependent upon his affections and his intellect. Therefore, man is a free agent, but does not have a free will. Man is responsible, but does not have the power to choose independent of his affections or his fallen nature. We might say that man is free, but his will is not free. Man has a liberty or a freedom from coercion, but he does not have the power from within to make the choice. SO THERE IS A VAST DISTINCTION BETWEEN MAN AS A FREE AGENT AND MAN HAVING A FREE WILL.

Man is a free agent because he does as he pleases, always as he pleases, and only as he pleases, and is therefore responsible. But on the other hand, man has not a free will because all the faculties of man's inner being are so interwoven and bound together that his judgment moves his desires, and his desires move his will. The reason he does not will to come to Christ is because his judgment is twisted, his understanding is darkened, and his mind is blinded; therefore he does not know the facts in the case. Now since his judgments and desires and affections are depraved, he does not want to know the facts in the case, and left to himself, he never will. No man can believe on Christ until he knows Him. Then BY MAN'S OWN INTELLECT, OR KNOWLEDGE, HE CAN NEVER KNOW GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. By wisdom the world knows not God. Apart from the grace of God you cannot find Christ.

As we said, man does as he pleases, but his will binds him and carries him downward, and man cannot reverse his fallen nature. Man cannot renew his own will. Man cannot change his own heart; neither can man regenerate or make anew his old fallen nature. So man is free as far as the outside forces are concerned, but his will is bound by his old nature, which is enmity toward God and he cannot please God. Therefore, man is free to sin, but is free from holiness, and man is helpless in his state of sin. Therefore man will not come to God because it is not in him to will to come to God. His whole fallen nature is turned into a direction away from God, and man cannot come to God, because his heart is darkened and deceived. Man can no more turn to God than a dead man can rise from the grave. SO GOD, AND GOD ALONE, BY HIS SOVEREIGN GRACE CAN CALL DEAD SINNERS TO LIFE, put a new nature in them, and release their depraved wills from the power of their old fallen nature and turn them toward Christ. So we have to come to the one conclusion that MAN'S WILL IS IN BONDAGE, and even though he is a free moral agent he has no free will.

Now let's come back to our text, "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM." "WHOSOEVER, is completely dependent upon the SOVEREIGN GRACE of God to believe in Christ. As we said, before you can believe in an individual, you must

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Then again He is spoken of as being "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps.90:2).

"From everlasting to everlasting thou art God", that is, "From eternity to eternity Thou art God." So we see the Bible sets forth God as the eternal Eternal One. Then as God's

Word says in Col. 3:3,

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

This being true, then the believer is eternal in Christ, and his salvation is eternal. This great truth is brought out in John 17:3,

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom thou hast sent."

SO ETERNAL LIFE IS KNOWING THE ETERNAL GOD -GOD THE FATHER,

GOD THE SON, AND GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT. So salvation is not an intellectual

concept of Christ, or a decision for Christ, but an experiential knowledge of the Lord

Jesus Christ Himself. The Apostle Paul said, "I know WHOM I have believed."

Then we face this fact - when and where does the believer's life in Christ begin? Did

you ever stop to think of that? The average individual thinks of salvation as a time

limit, that is, his salvation begins in time; but in reality the Bible knows and teaches no

such salvation. The Bible proclaims and sets forth definitely that salvation in Christ is

eternal - that is, from eternity to eternity. This truth is set forth in Jer.31:3,

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an ever-

lasting (eternal) love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

If God loved His children with an eternal love, then the love for them is eternal as

God's love is eternal. GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS CHILDREN HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN

HIS HEART FROM ETERNITY, AND WILL LAST TO ETERNITY. To me that is

one of the greatest truths, and one of the most comforting, set forth in God's Word -

God has loved me from eternity. I have always been an object of God's love, and that is

true of every one of His children. This same truth is brought out in Isa. 45:17,

"But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting (eternal) salvation: ye shall

not be ashamed nor confounded world without end."

So we see here that SALVATION IS ETERNAL IN JEHOVAH GOD. In other words,

in the mind of God there never has been a time that His children were not saved in the

Lord. Now you may not understand that, but that's so. Now I know our salvation, as far

as we are personally concerned, is in time, but in the mind and the purpose of God it

has been from eternity.

The above statements of fact lead us to look a little farther and deeper into these

mighty truths regarding eternal salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. First, GOD PUR-

POSED AND ORDAINED TO GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO HIS PEOPLE. In Eph.3:11

that great truth is set forth,

"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, what was that eternal purpose that God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord? We

find this purpose set forth in Eph. 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him (in

Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

before him in love"

or, "having predestinated us in love." God having foreknown us from eternity (as

Rom.8:29 says; "For whom he did foreknow"), chose or elected us in Christ because He

loved us, that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. So the purpose of God

in Christ from eternity was to give His people eternal life in Christ. God knowing and

is Christ, and Him alone. I Cor. 1:9 says, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." So salvation is God calling the sinner into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Then we find this same truth expressed in Gal. 1:15, "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, TO REVEAL HIS SON IN ME." Salvation is God the Father by the Holy Spirit revealing His Son in and to the heart of the believing sinner. So Christ is a revelation to the human heart. This same truth is stated in Col 1:27, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; WHICH IS CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory." Here He says that salvation is CHRIST IN YOU, which is a living, inseparable union of Christ and the believer. That truth is brought out in these words in Rom.8:1, "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST JESUS."

We also find this great truth in Col 3:4, "When Christ, WHO IS OUR LIFE, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Then Christ is the life of the believer, and there is life in none other. Listen to Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is NONE OTHER NAME under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Isn't that clear? Only an individual who is blinded to spiritual things would dare say that there is life in church membership or life in baptism, or life in keeping the sabbath or believing a set of doctrines. My life is in Christ, and the life of every believer is in Christ and Him alone - Christ crucified, Christ buried, Christ risen, and Christ exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on High. So the Gospel is Christ. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:34).

This truth is so clear in I John 5:11-12, "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."

Can language make a truth any clearer than set forth here in these verses of Scripture that ETERNAL LIFE IS CHRIST, AND CHRIST ALONE? If you will take your concordance and look up the words, "eternal" and "everlasting," you will be surprised to find how many times those words are used in connection with the believer's salvation in Christ. So the one conclusion we are forced to come to is that Christ, the Son of God, is the believer's life and salvation, and the reason it is called eternal salvation is because Christ is eternal. Heb. 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." In Deut.33:27 God is called, the eternal God."

know him. Before you can trust Christ and rely upon Him, or cling to Him, you must know Him. Therefore, it brings us back to this one great fact - that fallen man in his natural state, apart from the power of God, cannot know Christ, because, in the first place, HE IS A DEAD SINNER - dead in trespasses and in sins. How can a dead sinner know Christ in himself? Then, in the second place he is ALIENATED OR SEPARATED FROM THE LIFE THAT IS IN GOD. Then the individual who has no spiritual life in Him does not know Christ and has no desire to know Christ. Then, in the third place, MAN'S ENTIRE BEING IS DEPRAVED; therefore, he has no righteousness, no understanding or knowledge of God; he does not seek after God. He is going away from God; he has no natural goodness. The way of peace he has not known, and there is no fear of God before his eyes. His mouth is full of cursing; his throat is an open sepulchre; his heart is deceitful, incurably wicked; his righteousness is as filthy rags. He is in open rebellion against God; there is no love of God in his heart. He is without strength, and therefore he has no power to come to the Son except the Father draw him. His carnal mind is enmity against God. He has no power to do good. Therefore, he wills not to repent, and within himself he cannot come to Christ. So we see that the bondage of the sinner's will is definitely set forth in the Scriptures, and that it is one of the great doctrines of the Scriptures. It is also one of the great doctrines of God's Word that is set forth in a very positive way. Now let's see how THE NECESSITY OF REGENERATION IMPLIES THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL. An individual is born into the world without his own volition; in like manner he is born into the kingdom of God without his volition. If we say this statement is not true, we deny the new birth. Free will has nothing to do with the new birth. The Scripture says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). This carries us back to the first creation. Man had nothing to do with God creating man; therefore, the new creation is of God. Now the Scripture calls this new creation by such expressions as, "Christ in you," or "born of the Spirit," or "quickened by the Spirit," or "passed from death unto life." Call it whatever you may - it is the Lord God of Heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit taking a poor fallen sinner and making a new man out of him. This He does by the Word of God. This brings us back to our text, "WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM." We know from the Scriptures that faith is a gift of God, and an individual always takes a gift from the outside. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph.2:8). "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Gal.3:23). So faith is the stream or channel of divine life and is a gift from the Lord God of Heaven. The Scripture says in Psa.110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." So it is the resurrection power of the LORD GOD OF HEAVEN exercised by His sovereign will that raises a dead sinner to life in Christ. It is only when God makes a new creation out of that individual that he has the power to believe or cling to, or to rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone, as His Lord and Saviour. So then we can say without fear of contradiction, based entirely upon God's eternal Word, that "whosoever believeth in him" is conditioned entirely upon the basis of God's sovereign love. Therefore, as man has no power to make a choice, God has to make the choice. So you see, FREE WILL HAS NO PLACE IN REGENERATION, AS MAN HAS NO FREE WILL. Now brother, that

criers. You will not even cry for mercy unless God has put it in your heart to do SO. If the Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart and has moved it, then cry to the throne of God's grace for mercy, "God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord show me myself, and give me grace to acknowledge what You show me. Open my heart, oh Lord: I cannot open it. Lord, show me Christ, who died for a wretch like me."
My friend, **THE ONLY HOPE** I can hold out to you **IS THE SOVEREIGN LOVE AND THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD**. If He has set His love on you and moved your heart toward Christ, what grace, what mercy. Then cry unto Him to break you at His feet in the dust of repentance, taking your place as a poor, lost, undone, wicked, wretched sinner with no hope outside of Christ. My prayer is that Christ will become all in all to your heart and life, that He may be the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega, world without end.

ETERNAL LIFE

Our subject today in our fourth study of John 3:16 is, "ETERNAL LIFE." Let's read our text to have it fresh in our minds,
"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."
In our first study on this text we set forth "God's Sovereign Love." Our second study was, "The Bondage of the Sinner's Will, " and our third study was, "The Lost Sinner" as set forth in the third chapter of John.
ETERNAL LIFE is the life that God gives to every child of His; He says they "HAVE EVERLASTING (eternal) LIFE." Nearly every unsaved individual you meet today has a different, erroneous concept of what salvation is. It is because the Gospel is hid from those who are lost, blinded by the god of this world (1 Cor.4:3,4). Neither the unsaved religionist nor the man of the world can think straight; neither knows what salvation in Christ means. I met a man the other day who said, "Brother Shelton, I agree with you on nearly everything you preach except the eternal security of the believer." He says this because he does not know what salvation is.

Our text, John 3:16 says,
Whosoever believeth in him (Christ) should not perish (be lost) but have everlasting (eternal) life."

Now the questions arise, "WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE? What does the Bible mean when it says that the believer in Christ has, or possesses, eternal life?" To answer these questions we must know what salvation is. Let's turn to Matt. 1:21,

"She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for HE shall save his people from their sins."

Then Jonah 2:9 says,

"Salvation is of the LORD."

From these Scriptures and many more we could quote, we can draw only one conclusion - that the SALVATION of every sinner IS CHRIST, that our salvation is wrapped up in a Person, and in a Person alone; that Person is the crucified, buried, risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ.

That being so, church membership has nothing to do with salvation. Baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Salvation is not obeying a set of rules or believing a system of doctrine. Salvation is not doing the best you can, or living the best you can. Salvation

cuts right down across the grain, doesn't it?

Let's take an illustration found in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, where we find the vision of dry bones. The Scripture says, "they were very dry" with no flesh on them. The Lord God asked Ezekiel the question, "Son of man, CAN THESE DRY BONES LIVE?" Free-willers would have cried out, "Surely they can live," but listen to old Ezekiel, "O LORD GOD, THOU KNOWEST." Then said the Lord God unto these dry bones.

"Behold, I WILL CAUSE breath to enter into you, and ye shall live."

The trouble is, free-willers do not hear the Word of God. Free-willers cannot and will not hear the Word of God.

Now let me give you another illustration - the resurrection of Lazarus. Lazarus represents a sinner dead in trespasses and sins. His sister said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he has been dead four days" (John 11:29).

Free-willers say, "He can raise himself from the dead, "but it was only when the Lord Jesus Christ cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" that Lazarus came forth. It is ONLY WHEN GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKS to that sinner's heart and says, "Live!" that he comes forth from the grave of corruption and is made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Let me ask you these questions, Can a blind man make himself see? Can a deaf man unstop his ears and cause himself to hear? Can a dumb man loose his tongue and make his lips to speak? Free-willers say he can, but the Word of God says it is only by the power of God - that SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.

Let me go a step further and make this statement, that every doctrine of God's Word hangs upon and confirms the total depravity of fallen man, and as I have often said, "IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE CONDITION OF FALLEN MAN, YOU DO NOT AND CANNOT RIGHTLY UNDERSTAND ANY OTHER DOCTRINE OF GOD'S WORD." Let me further ask you, "What is election but God choosing because we cannot choose?" What is the new birth but God making alive the dead sinner who cannot even stir? What is perseverance but God carrying on the work that He has begun in the heart of "whosoever believeth in Him"?

Now, do you see, my friend, how multitudes of people have taken this great gem of the Scriptures and dragged it in the dust of free-willism until they have destroyed the meaning of it and made it a laughingstock to the world and prejudiced the minds of people against it? If you will view closely the picture that we have given you of fallen man, you will see it is sheer nonsense to stand before an individual and tell him to believe in Christ, when he has no knowledge of himself and no knowledge of Christ. SALVATION IS BASED FIRST UPON THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN. A sinner comes to know himself and how blinded he is, how stupid he is, how ignorant he is, only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit in his heart and life, making him a new creature in Christ. The Holy Spirit cannot and will not bring him to a saving knowledge of Christ until first he has brought him to a certain and definite knowledge of himself. When the Holy Spirit has brought that sinner to a definite knowledge of himself, and he has come to see what a sinner he is (which can only be done by the power of God), THEN AND ONLY THEN CAN THE HOLY SPIRIT SHOW HIM WHO CHRIST IS. Then that individual, who has come to the definite knowledge of himself as a lost, ruined, ill-deserving sinner and who has no righteousness or goodness of his own, sees that,

left to himself, he could not come to Christ.

So we see that it is the Holy Spirit's work in the heart of a sinner to give him that knowledge of his utter helplessness, his right view of sin and its power, the knowledge of his unbelief, the knowledge that he is a son of Satan and is held captive by Satan. Then He sees that free will can do him no good. This is where the sinner cries out, "Lord, I can't believe; help Thou my unbelief." The sinner's one cry is, "Lord, don't leave me; don't forsake me. Save me, Lord, or I perish. Give me faith to lay hold of You." He realizes his weakness; he realizes his utter helplessness. The Holy Spirit slowly but surely tears him loose and separates him completely from all creature faith; He takes all other gods from before him and leaves him standing, as it were, before a sovereign God - guilty, condemned to die, unable to believe, with only one plea:

"Christ died, and He died for me."

It is also the work of the Holy Spirit to show him that Christ died for such a sinner as he is, and that God's sovereign love elected him as an object of mercy, and put a cry in his heart after Christ. It is this prayer that God put in his heart that God answers. Then comes to his heart and mind that great command,

"WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH." There the sinner stands with all hope gone, but it is there that the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to that sinner's heart. By faith the Holy Spirit places in that sinner's heart, according to Acts 18:27, faith to believe Christ. Then he becomes one of "whosoever that believeth in him."

THE LOST SINNER

As we continue our study today, let's hear God's Word, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). I never quarrel with an individual who does not understand the Word of God, because, according to the Word of God, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John 3:27). I can't cram it down your throat. I can't make you see and understand it. I can't make you believe it. After the resurrection of Christ, as recorded in the 24th chapter of Luke, He OPENED THE UNDERSTANDING of His disciples, and also OPENED THE SCRIPTURES (Luke 24:45) that they might understand. If the Holy Spirit has not opened your mind or understanding, and illuminated the Scriptures, the only thing that you can see in John 3:16 is free will. You can't see anything else. I didn't; for years I was in that condition, but the Lord opened my mind one day and illuminated the Scriptures.

That goes for many other gracious gems of Scripture that you misunderstand, misemphasize, and misapply. In the interpretation of Scripture, remember one thing - YOU CANNOT INTERPRET ONE SCRIPTURE TO CONTRADICT ANOTHER. For instance, in Romans He said,

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9-13).

Now that is Scripture whether you like it or not, whether you believe it or not. Then to turn right around and say that God loves everybody is to contradict that Scripture. To do so you have to try to explain that Scripture away. When the Scripture plainly says in Jonah 2:9,

"Salvation is of the Lord,"

birth (John 3:6; Titus 3:5,6; 1 Pet. 1:23). May I say again, you do not learn one spiritual truth except God give it to you.

NOW, MY FRIEND, WHERE IS YOUR FREE WILL? If the above is the characteristic of every sinner out of Christ, you do not come into possession of one thing but that which is given to you, and it is given to you on the basis of free sovereign grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't earn it; you can't earn it. You are blind and can't see. You are impotent and cannot walk into the kingdom of God. You are born of the flesh, and the flesh can beget nothing but flesh. You are bitten by sin, and are under the condemnation of God. You love darkness and hate light. You love sin and hate holiness. Therefore, everything in the world that you ever receive is from the Lord. Therefore, SALVATION IS OF THE LORD (Jonah 2:9). Now let me briefly call your attention to that 30th verse which reads thus,

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

Every sinner coming to Christ must decrease in his own imagination, and in his own concept of himself and in his own estimation. In other words, EVERY SINNER MUST COME TO SEE HIMSELF AS HE IS, with all his pride gone, his rebellion subdued, and he must take his place as a lost, doomed, damned sinner at the feet of Christ. Everything else must fade away and the sinner find himself at the feet of Christ for Him to save him according to God's sovereign grace and love, or damn him according to God's sovereign justice. Let me say again, Christ does not and never has and never will stand before a sinner to be accepted or rejected, but the sinner is prostrate in the dust of repentance at the feet of Christ as it were with a rope around his neck to be saved or damned at the disposal of the Lord God of Heaven. So in the sinner's eyes Christ is all in all, and the sinner is nothing. That truth and fact will hold good throughout the life of the believer.

In conclusion, let's turn to that 36th verse and read, "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."

There are two outstanding characteristics of every lost sinner in that verse: one is, "He shall not see life." Therefore, if you do not have the Son, YOU DO NOT HAVE LIFE; therefore, YOU DO NOT SEE LIFE. This is life eternal, that you know Christ, the Son of God (John 17:3). Isn't it an awful state to be in, sinner - no life, because no Christ? The other is the worst of all, YOU ABIDE UNDER THE WRATH OF GOD. Did you ever stop to think that every moment you live, whether at work, or at home, or travelling, or eating, or playing, you are under the wrath of God? You live under the wrath of God. God is angry with you every moment of your life, as set forth in Ps. 7:11, "God is angry with the wicked every day." May the God of all grace and the Father of all mercies open your blinded eyes to see that you are under the wrath of a sin-avenging God, and that you are living only under a reprieve waiting the day of execution. You are condemned to die, and the instrument of death is already prepared for thee (Ps. 7:13).

Now, you may ask, "Brother Shelton, in the face of these twelve outstanding characteristics of a lost sinner, WHAT IS MY HOPE?" My dear friend, your only hope is CHRIST. Your hope is not walking the church aisle and giving the preacher your hand. Your hope is not making a profession of faith in Christ. Your hope is not a decision or anything you may do. If the God of all grace has put a cry in your heart and given you grace to cry, you can cry for mercy. All of God's children are

cannot rescue himself or pardon himself from the guilt and penalty of sin. He cannot deliver himself from the power of it, or from the power of Satan, for he is taken captive by Satan at his will (1 Tim. 2:26). That is the condition of every sinner. Now how is that sinner going to get out from under the judgment of God? HE HAS TO BE PARADONED! Such a pardon comes from the Lord God of Heaven, and before any sinner can be pardoned, he must know he is condemned to die. How does he know it? By the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Our trouble today is, there is practically no Holy Spirit conviction in our pulpits and pews.

As we proceed with our study, the picture of a sinner as set forth here by our Lord grows darker.

Let's read that 19th verse,

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Now here is set forth the most awful characteristic of a lost sinner, and that is, HE LOVES SIN. He loves the pleasures of unrighteousness. He loves the life that he is living; he loves darkness. He loves Satan, and the power of darkness. His whole nature is turned against God. The Holy Spirit put it like this in Rom. 8:7,

"He is enmity against God: for he is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This is because the sinner is sin. He is not at enmity with God, but he IS ENMITY against God. He is not a sinner, primarily, but he is sin. His whole being - every member of his being, every faculty of his life - is sin, and he loves sin; he is set against God and holiness. And the sinner has no power to change that nature. No preacher has the power to change it. Even God cannot change it. The sinner must be born again. He must be made a new creation in Christ Jesus. God sets aside all that the sinner is within himself and makes a new being, or implants a new nature like unto the Son of God. This is wholly the work of the Holy Spirit. This is wrought through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sinner cannot pardon himself any more than he can open his blinded eyes. God must do the pardoning; God must open his eyes, and the Holy Spirit must place a new nature in him that we call the new birth.

Now we come to that 20th verse. Let me call your attention to this phrase,

"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light"

We noticed in the 19th verse this phrase, As we turn to the 27th verse, we notice another outstanding characteristic of every lost sinner. Listen to God's Word, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Talk about your free will - this verse of Scripture is a clincher, isn't it? NO SINNER RECEIVES ANYTHING FROM GOD EXCEPT IT BE GIVEN HIM. You can receive no material blessing or spiritual blessing unless God gives it to you from heaven. Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11), and God does not give one thing to a saint or a sinner, except through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:32). Therefore, you do not receive salvation, and cannot receive salvation in Christ except it be given to you. You do not learn one spiritual truth of God's Word, except it be given to you directly from God Himself. You cannot know one thing about yourself except it come to you by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Read the 17th chapter of John, and you will find over and again that God gives every one of His children to Christ, and then Christ gives unto them eternal life. You don't earn it; it's a gift, God has to grant you repentance (Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18). God has to give you faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 18:27). God gives you Christ (John 4:10). God gives you the new

then you cannot interpret any other Scripture in the Bible to contradict that great eternal truth. When it says in John 6:44, "No man can come to the Son except the Father draw him," then you have to interpret other Scripture to fit in with that. To ignore one Scripture to interpret another Scripture apart from it is contrary to the rules of interpretation.

In our study of John 3:16 we first saw, God's Sovereign Love, and in our second message we saw, The Bondage of the Sinner's Will. Our study today is, "THE LOST SINNER." Let's read our text,

"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."

Let's look at that phrase, "Whosoever believeth in him should not PERISH, but have everlasting life." That expression, "SHOULD NOT PERISH," is conditioned on "whosoever believeth." "Whosoever believeth" is conditioned on "for God so loved, that is, God's sovereign love.

The word, "PERISH," comes from the Greek word, "APOLLUMI," which is translated in Mark 2:22 as "marred."

"And no man putteth new wine in old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be MARRED: but new wine must be put in new bottles."

Then this same Greek word is translated in Matt. 10:6 as "lost."

"But go rather to the LOST sheep of the house of Israel."

It is also translated in Matt. 15:24 as "lost."

"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the LOST sheep of the house of Israel."

Then it is translated "lost" in Luke 15:4-6,32. Let's read verse 32:

"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was LOST (or perishing), and is found."

So we could read it,

"That whosoever believeth in him should not be lost, but have everlasting life."

Therefore, our subject is "THE LOST SINNER."

Now the questions are asked, "Who is a lost sinner?" and "What is God's estimate of a lost sinner?" or "What is God's description of a lost sinner?" Without going anywhere else in the Bible, we find in the third chapter of John God's vivid description of a lost sinner out of Christ. If you have your Bible, let's open it at the 3rd chapter of John, will you? each up and get your Bible and turn to the 3rd chapter of John. If you have a pencil or a pen, I want you to mark these expressions. Now you listen.

THERE ARE TWELVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A LOST SINNER SET FORTH IN THE THIRD CHAPTER OF JOHN that I want to call your attention to. They are just as plain as language can make them, and yet they are overlooked by every free-willer, who will reach out and just take John 3:16 out of that great chapter and interpret it according to his own opinion! The first one is set forth in the 3rd verse, which reads thus,

"Except a man be born ago in, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Now look at that expression, "He cannot see the Kingdom of God." EVERY LOST SINNER IS BLIND - HE CAN'T SEE. He is blinded by the god of this world, so much so until the Gospel is hid from him, according to II Cor 4:3-4. If a sinner cannot see the Gospel, which is Christ, if he cannot see the blessings of the atonement,

TIL HE IS BORN AGAIN.

Now let's look at the 12th verse, and you will find set forth another characteristic of every lost sinner,

"How shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

Christ, speaking to Nicodemus, put it in the form of a question, "How shall ye believe heavenly things?" If he is blind, he can't see them, if he is hopeless and cannot enter, then HE CANNOT ATTAIN TO HEAVENLY THINGS. This fact is brought out so clearly in I Cor. 2:11, where it says, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." This being true, then a lost sinner does not know, and cannot know, heavenly things and things of the kingdom, or spiritual things, until he is born again. You cannot make him see it. In the first place, he has no taste for them; in the second place, they are obnoxious to him; in the third place, he does not want to know them; and in the fourth place, he cannot know them unless they be given him from above by the Holy Spirit.

Now let's look at another characteristic of a lost sinner, as set forth in the 17th and 18th verses of John 3,

"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."

We see here one of the outstanding characteristics of every lost sinner is, HE IS UNDER THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. Christ said to Nicodemus, "I come into the world not to judge (or condemn) the world." Why? Because the world has already been judged and is under judgment. He said, "I came to save every one who will believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Are you beginning to see the awful condition of a sinner? He is blind and cannot see; he is impotent and cannot walk; he cannot believe heavenly things, and everything that he does is of the flesh. And then here it says he is under the judgment of God.

Being under judgment means that he stands before God guilty, condemned to die. Why? Because he is a lost sinner.

That truth is brought out in the 14th verse,

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness..."

The word, "serpent," there indicates that every sinner is a child of Satan, has the nature of a snake, is bitten with sin, and the virus of sin has consumed his whole life, so much so until you cannot separate the sinner from his sins. The sinner is sin. Therefore, HE IS JUDGED GUILTY ALREADY. He is not on probation, but only under a reprieve, awaiting the day of execution, and he does not know when that moment will come. He is locked in the prison house of sin, guilty, condemned to die. He is perishing. He is lost. He is waiting for the day of slaughter. He is on the road to destruction and cannot save himself. He is lost and cannot find the way home. Oh, what an awful condition every sinner is in!

My friend, no individual can clearly understand the awful position and condition of a lost sinner until he is awakened by the power of the Holy Spirit and sees himself clearly as he is, under the judgment of God. We are living in a day when the average individual in and out of the pulpit thinks of sin as merely some little disease, not knowing that it has locked the sinner in the cell of condemnation, and he

if he cannot see the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17), then how in the world can he believe until he is born again! He is lost, and as Ps. 107 says, "he is wandering in the wilderness," wandering up and down in vain, searching and yet finding nothing. He is lost in a boundless waste. He is utterly lost, and does not know the way out because he cannot see, and he cannot open his own eyes. The most tragical thing of it all is, he is always going in the opposite direction from God - that is, away from God. An individual who is lost physically is always turned around, and never goes in the right direction. So it is with a lost sinner. He is always going in the opposite direction from God.

Another characteristic of a lost sinner is set forth in the 5th verse in these words, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

That expression, "HE CANNOT ENTER into the kingdom of God," sets forth the great truth that he cannot find his way back to God. HE DOES NOT KNOW THE WAY. Christ said, "I am the way," but he does not know Christ. Therefore, he cannot enter in until he is born again. Christ said, "I am the way," and the way is narrow. The way is hard. The way is strait, and few there be that find it. Only the one who is born again finds the way into the kingdom of God. No matter how much he searches, no matter how much anyone tells him, he cannot find his way back to God. If he starts in search of God, he is like a sinner lost physically; he begins travelling in a circle, always coming back to the place from which he started. Then please tell me, free-willer, how is that man going to get to Christ if salvation is not of the Lord? So in the first place, he is blinded and cannot see; in the second place, he is without hope of ever finding the way back to God of his own accord, and he cannot go in. HE CANNOT; HE IS IMPOTENT - HE IS HELPLESS. He cannot enter in. May the Holy Spirit drive that truth home to your heart. If you are saved, you have been saved by the grace of God, wholly and solely of the Lord. If you were not saved wholly of grace, you are not saved. If there is one thread of works in your so-called salvation, you are lost!

Then in the 6th verse is set forth this great characteristic of a lost sinner, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

This truth is brought out so clearly in John 1:13, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That which is born of the flesh is always flesh. FLESH CANNOT CHANGE ITSELF. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer. 13:23). So no sinner can turn himself toward God. No sinner can find God by his works, or by his faith, or by anything he does. Everything that the sinner does, or is, is of the flesh. You can cultivate the flesh, you can train it, you can educate it; it is still flesh. You may become religious, but you are still of the flesh. You must be born of the Spirit, and this is a miracle of grace, sovereign free grace, based upon God's sovereign love for the sinner. I know it is taught everywhere that every sinner has the power to make his own choice for salvation in Christ, but nowhere in the Word of God is that taught. I know some go a little farther and teach that a sinner must be convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that he must repent toward God, and must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but then they will tell you that the faith with which the sinner trusts Christ is a faith that can be exercised by the sinner at his will. But let me tell you, friend, no such doctrine is taught in God's Word. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and will remain flesh, and NO SINNER CAN BELIEVE UN-