

GOD

“For God So Loved . . . That He Gave. . . ”

(God)

These words are so simple that they are inevitably among the first words of Scripture which little children commit to memory. They are also at the same time so utterly profound that the wisest of men cannot completely comprehend them. “For God so loved . . . that He gave. . . .” In these few words we have not only the world’s greatest giver, but also the world’s greatest gift, and paradoxically, both giver and gift are identically the same. The gift which God gave, you see, was Himself.

“For God so loved . . . that He gave. . . .” The intrinsic nature of God combined with the inherent nature of love provided no other alternative. If God were to be God and love were to be love, it had to work out that way. The very nature of God is to love and the very nature of love is to give. God could not be God without love and love could not be love without giving.

“For God so loved . . . that He gave. . . .” He turned his back upon the regal splendor of heaven for a life of abject poverty

in a world of trouble. He said "no" to omnipotence and came struggling from a virgin's womb so utterly helpless that he could not have survived a single day without benevolent care from the very people which He had created. His fragile little body was wrapped in swaddling clothes and his tiny little lungs were filled with the noxious odor of animal waste and manger dust. But God was God and love was love and Christ was on a collision course with destiny.

"For God so loved . . . that He gave. . . ." He put away his carpenter's tools a final time and turned his back upon the peace and tranquility of Nazareth for a life of constant confrontation with sin and evil, sickness and disease. He did not stay on the sidelines but became involved in the game of life to the hilt. He brought the beauty of the sunset to blinded eyes and songs of laughter to deafened ears. He dared to touch the leper and extend a helping hand to social outcasts and sinners. He made the children laugh and He enabled the lame to leap for joy.

"For God so loved . . . that He gave. . . ." and the ultimate expression of that love was seen at Calvary. The night before He entered into Gethsemane and fell upon his face. "Father," he said, "if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." His sweat turned crimson in the light of the Passover moon and an angel came to minister to Him in the hour of His agony and need. "Not my will" He cried, "But thine be done." And there in these poignant words is the very essence of love, for love does not insist upon having its own way. It is so utterly selfless that it inevitably and ultimately finds expression in a benevolent outreach to others. The Scriptures teach "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us" and then it adds, "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

"For God so loved . . . that He gave. . . ." This is the message of Christmas but it is a message which goes far beyond the story of a babe in Bethlehem's manger. It is a message of self-denial that involved a life of service and the agony of a cross.

May we so love that also we would give.

The Study of God

These remarks were delivered by C.H. Spurgeon on January 7th, 1855. At the time he was but twenty-five years of age.

"It has been said by someone that the proper study of man is man. I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, 'Behold I am wise.' But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation, 'I am but of yesterday, and know nothing.' No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. . . .

But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe . . . The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietness for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as

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from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know of nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as the devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you. . . .”

These profound remarks have been taken from the book *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer (pp. 13-14). May they provide inspiration and encouragement for you today to “plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea” and “be lost in His immensity.” Surely you will find it a “couch of rest” which will refresh and invigorate your soul. Modern man spawns great thoughts of man and small thoughts of God. Reason argues that it ought to be the other way around.

HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD?