

He Laid Down His Life for Us

Sunday, June 6th, 1986

1 John 3:16

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

The apostle Paul wrote to the church of Corinth and expressed the fear that Satan would corrupt their minds from the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ. He said; *“As Satan in his subtlety (and craftiness) deceived our mother Eve; I fear lest you be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ.”*

Satan will do that, he has done that and in many places he is doing that today. How strange and complicated many preachers and many religious professors try to make this matter of faith in salvation. Satan in his subtlety takes men’s minds off of the simplicity of Christ.

For example: The Jews asked our Lord after asking Him many questions about the resurrection and questions about tribute money, one of them said; *“Master, which is the greatest law of all?”* Our Lord replied, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength and thy neighbor as thyself.”* That is simplicity; *“On these two hang all the Law and the prophets.”*

Then, the Pharisees asked Him one day, *“What shall we do that we might work the works of God?”* That can be complicated and we have complicated it. *“What shall we do that we may work the works of God?”* Christ replied, *“This is the work of God that you believe on Him whom God hath sent.”* That is the work of God and that is simplicity.

Then there is the jailer down in Philippi. The Philippian jailer rushed in and fell on his knees and looked at the apostle Paul and said, *“Sirs; what must I do to be saved?”* Can you imagine some of the answers that he would receive in this day if he would ask that question; if he asked it of this preacher, that preacher, this soul-winner or this denomination or that denomination?

Can you imagine some of the answers that he would receive in this day if he went down to the seminary or Bible College and asked, *“What must I do to be saved?”* Oh, the complicated response that he would get today.

How did Paul reply? The question was, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* Paul replied, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”* That is simplicity!

You know; I read one time that great truths and great thoughts can be expressed in simple words; for example: There are the words, “thank you;” what is greater than that? What greater truth or thought can you express than thank you? They are two, one-syllable words.

What about the simple words, “I love you?” That is so simple, yet it is a great, profound, theme; “I love you.”

What about this one, “God bless you?” Those are three simple, one-syllable words and yet there is the great thought behind it; “God bless you” and the words, “thank you.”

Listen to the Scripture; it says, *“As you would that men should do unto you, do you even so unto them.”* What about this one; *“This is My commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.”*

You may ask me what I am saying. What I am saying is this; the Word of God in its expression and teaching is simple; it is not complicated like today’s religion. It is not complicated or intellectual; it is just simple and is one or two syllable words. *“This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.”*

Listen to this; *“No man can serve two masters.”* That is simple isn’t it? It is simple and it is understandable; *“No man can serve two masters.”* This is impossible, you cannot serve God and serve mammon.

What about this, *“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness?”* He believed God. *“It was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him for righteousness but for our sake also to whom righteousness shall be charged if we believe on Him who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead who was delivered for our offenses (crucified for our sins) and raised again for our justification.”*

You know; while simple words convey great thoughts, someone said, “Feeble thoughts and feeble ideas have to be dressed up in complicated, rhetoric, and fine language.” The more feeble the thought the more rhetoric we need or the more oratory and complicated terms we need.

Someone said this, “The intellectual preachers need Latin words to express man’s religion. God’s servants are content to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in simple language in the Spirit of God and with understanding.” I’m going to try to do that today.

Here is my text, my topic and my subject: I need for you to open your Bible to 1 John 3:16. If you want to talk about simplicity or talk about a profound and glorious theme in the simplest words, the Scripture says; *“Hereby, perceive we, (understand) the love of God because (7 one-syllable words) He laid down His life for us.”*

I will tell you this; here is the most profound, the most sublime, and the most glorious truth in the entire world. This is the greatest truth ever put in human language, the greatest truth that the human ear can hear, and yet it is proclaimed in seven, simple, uncomplicated, one-syllable words. The Scripture says, *“He the (King of Glory) lay down, (gave voluntarily) His life”* (even to the death of the cross for us). He laid down His life for us.

Now, there are four lessons that I see in this fact that Christ laid down His life for us. I want you to listen very carefully, the first truth is this:

Who is it that has laid down his life? My friends; there is no understanding of the death of Christ or that which was accomplished by the death of Christ unless we understand the person of Christ. We are not going to be able to understand the sufficiency of His death. We are not going to be able to understand what was accomplished by His death unless we understand something about the person who died.

The efficacy and the value of the death of Christ depend totally on who Christ is. *“He laid down His life for us.”* That is where the greatest emphasis is, *“He laid down His life for us.”*

If I told you that God died for us on the cross of Calvary, there is some truth in that. There is an element of truth in that *“for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”* You wouldn’t understand what I was talking about and you couldn’t believe it or rejoice in it because, simply, God can’t die.

God can’t die and God can’t lie. God cannot do wrong. God is life and in Him there is no death or no darkness. If I told you today, *“He laid down His life for us,”* and said that He is God and God alone, you would have no cause to rejoice because you would come right back and say, “Preacher; God can’t die; God is life.”

All right; suppose I told you that a man died for us, a man named “Jesus of Nazareth” died on the cross for us. You would admire His kindness; you would appreciate His love and you would have great respect for Him but you still could not rejoice. You could not give thanks because a man’s death would never satisfy the Holy Law of God.

A man's death could never satisfy the justice of God. If all the men in the whole world died, it still wouldn't satisfy the infinite, holiness and justice of God. Are you with me? *"He laid down His life for us."* Who is this *"He"* who laid down His life for us?

Well, we just can't say that He is God though He is. We can't just say that He is man, though He is. We can say this; He is the God-man.

You see; Jesus Christ who was born of Mary and who lived on this earth for 33 ½ years and died on that cross is no mere man. He is indeed a man but He is the God-man. This is the very foundation of our faith.

This is the very foundation of our cause to rejoice and this is the foundation of our hope; God became a man. That is what it is all about. This is what He announced in Genesis 3:15; the Scripture says; *"The seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head."*

The serpent is Satan who used the serpent. His head is his government, power, and authority. No man is the seed of woman; a woman does not have a seed. We are all the seed of man because we are naturally born. Jesus Christ is the *"seed of woman."*

"Behold, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, a virgin shall conceive (without the aid of a man) and bring forth a Son and you shall call His name Emmanuel, (God with us). In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and all things were made by Him. Without Him was not anything made that was made and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

So, Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. In Matthew 1:21, when the angel announced the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, he said; *"That Holy thing which Mary carries in her womb is the Son of God."* That Holy thing has never been known before or since. *"That Holy thing is the Son of God, Emmanuel,"* and God with us.

You see, God was in Christ; He is the God-man. This is what the Scripture teaches. Man cannot satisfy anything that God requires. Man cannot satisfy. God can't suffer. Man cannot satisfy but man can suffer. God cannot suffer but God can satisfy. So, Jesus Christ became the God-man, a perfect God, very God of very God, and the perfect man.

No one knows the sufficiency of Christ. What does sufficiency mean? Sufficiency means that He gets the job done. No one knows the efficacy of Christ. What do I mean about efficacy? Efficacy means that it is sufficient and the debt and price is paid.

No one knows the glory of the death of Christ until he understands the person of Christ. I hear them singing a song, "Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves." No, they should sing; "The Lord Jesus Saves." A man called "Jesus" cannot save but the Lord is able to save. *"In Adam we die; in Christ we are made alive. The first Adam is of the earth, earthy; the second Adam is the Lord from heaven."*

Do you see how clear that is? *"He laid down His life for us. Who is it that condemneth, it is Christ that died, yea, rather, is risen again who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us."* That is plain isn't it? I'm talking about the God-man.

Secondly: If He died that we might live, how great our sins must be. This is another thing that most people do not understand. Preachers do not make this clear (the greatness of our sins). David said; *"I have sinned against God."* How evil and corrupt sin must be, if this sin business can only be forgiven, can only be blotted out and atoned for by the death of the Son of God.

Now, we take sin lightly. We joke about sin and we ridicule the preacher preaching against sin and so forth. Paul called this thing of sin, *"the sinfulness of sin, the evil of sin."* Sin is not just an act; it is a nature, a principle that dwells within us. This sin produces evil deeds.

This business of understanding the sinfulness of sin and the corruption of the human heart is a work that only the Holy Spirit can perform. The Holy Spirit, in using the Word of God, enables us to view sin in several lights; I am going to give you four:

First of all: The Holy Spirit enables us to see sin in the light of God's Law. Paul said, *"I would not have known sin had not the Law said; thou shall not covet."* When he saw that and when the Law reached His heart, he saw that he had a covetous heart, a murmuring heart an unthankful heart. He saw that that he murmured against the providence and purpose of God, he saw that he was not content with who he was, what he had and what he knew.

Then, we are convicted of sin in the light of God's power and majesty. When the apostle Peter saw our Lord perform that great miracle of the catching of the whole net full of fish, he was so astounded by the power, majesty, and control of Christ over the fish of the sea, that he shook his head and said; *"Lord, depart from me; I am a sinful man. I am a weak, sinful man."* He saw sin and he saw himself in light of God's power and greatness.

The Holy Spirit enables us to see sin in the light of God's character. Isaiah saw God in His holiness, in His immutable, infinite, holiness and he cried; *"Woe is me."*

Job saw the Lord in the light of His wisdom, His might and His majesty. He saw the Lord in His control and Sovereignty over all things. Job cried; *“I hate myself.”*

Then, we see sin in the light of Christ’s death, for nothing can put away sin but the death of Christ. That is how deep the dye is and how evil sin is; it takes the blood of God to put it away. The stain is so deep and the dye has run so deep that it has double-dyed and is red like crimson and it takes the blood of God’s Son to put it away.

The Jewish sacrifices couldn’t put away sin. *“The blood of bulls and goats cannot put away sin.”* Works and deeds cannot put away sin; *“By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”*

Religion cannot put away sin, professions of faith cannot put away sin and even repentance and faith cannot put away sin. Even hell cannot put away sin. Think about that! A man may spend eternity in hell and still not be rid of his sins.

The Scripture says, *“Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”* There are sins, your sins, my sins, past, present and future. There are sins of omission and commission. There are sins of anger and hatred, sins of lust and passions, and sins of ingratitude. There are sins inwardly and outwardly, secretly and openly.

There are so many sins *“from the soles of our feet to the top of our heads.”* There are sins in dreams, in motives, attitude, spirit, conduct, words, and actions. There are sins, yet He has blotted them out, put them away and has cast them into the depths of the sea by the blood of His Son. Sin is what we are. Sins is what we have done. There is evil even in our best deeds.

God being God must punish sin. You see; if you have a God that does not punish sin then you have a God who is not holy. If you have a God who is not holy then you have a wrong God. God cannot compromise His Holiness:

Oh the bliss of that glorious thought,
My sins not in part but the whole,
Are nailed to the cross
I bear them no more.

Praise the Lord,
Praise the Lord,
Oh my soul.

That is plain isn't it? He, the God-man, laid down His life for us. Why did He lay down His life for us? The reason is because we are such great sinners.

I'm weary of people who are unwilling to take their place before God as a sinner. I can understand them defending their righteousness and their calls in the courts of men, but my soul, to stand in the court of God Almighty and in the supreme, heavenly court; you have no defense, alibi or excuse.

Don't claim to be what you are not before God. You are a sinner and I am a sinner. The Scripture says, *"There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that doeth good and there is none that seeth after God. We are altogether become unprofitable."* That is right! *"All we like sheep we have all gone astray."* *"He laid down His life for us."* This is the good news.

Thirdly, If He lay down His life for us, how great must be His love; *"Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends. But God commended His love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Christ didn't die for His friends; He died for enemies. *"Christ died for the ungodly."*

When I think of the love of God in choosing us (for He chose us from all eternity and made us a part of that Everlasting Covenant), I am amazed. Our Lord said, *"Rejoice, because your names are written in the Book of Life."* I am amazed that God should choose me and you. Christ said, *"You didn't choose me; I chose you."*

When I think of His love that *"predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son,"* I am amazed. Paul wrote in Ephesians, *"In love He predestinated us to the adoption of children according to the good pleasures of His own will."* Peter said, God has given us *"an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away."* I am amazed at His love.

When I think of His love of purpose and providence that protected us and hedged us about, fed us, clothed us, called us, kept us and met every need for us *"according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus,"* God took care of His own. *"He called us by His grace."* I am amazed. Why should He love me so?

“And can it be
That I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love,

How can it be?
That Thou, my God,
Should die for me?"

When I contemplate what awaits a believer in glory, you have to think of it, what awaits every believer in glory in the presence of God Almighty, I am overwhelmed when I see the Son of God in human flesh, actually numbered with the transgressors. He became one with us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He took on Himself the "*likeness of sinful flesh.*"

Before the court of Heaven, He became a transgressor. That is exactly right! "*He bore our sins in His body.*" He took our sins in Himself. When I consider that our Lord Jesus Christ has actually took our sins in His body on the tree and endured not only the wrath of hell, the wrath of men, and the wrath of governments, but the wrath of heaven, that is the love of God. He cried; "*My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?*"

When I think of that, that He was forsaken of God, I say; that is the love of God. That is where the love of God is seen more than any other place. It is not in the everlasting Covenant, although it is there. It is not in His preserving, providential care, although it is there. It is not even in His calling to faith; it is there.

But, when I see Him suffering on the cross, bearing our sins in His body as our sin-offering, sacrifice and as our Substitute, I say; there is the love of God. The love of God is so much there that the apostle Paul writes to the church at Rome and says; "*Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect; it is God that justifieth.*"

"Who can condemn, it is Christ that died? Who can separate us from the love of God; shall tribulation, distress, famine, pestilence, or sword? Nay, in all of these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. I am persuaded, that neither height, nor depth, nor width, nor breadth, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature can separate us from that glorious love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord," in Jesus Christ crucified:

"Oh, love of God
How rich, how pure
How measureless, how strong.
It shall forevermore endure
The saint's and angel's songs.

Could we with ink

The ocean fill
And where the skies of parchment made

And every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade.

To write the love of God above
Would drain that ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll
Contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky.”

Yes, He laid aside His crown of glory and wore a crown of thorns. He laid aside His robe of brightness and took a robe of flesh. He laid aside His scepter to hold the mocking reed. He laid aside all of His glory in Heaven that He might bear our sins. He thirsted that I might drink the water of life. He died that I might live. That is love!

Here is the last point: Did He lay down His life for us, then how safe we must be? You know; it is foolish to talk of someone perishing for who Christ died. I think that folks that walk down a church aisle still perish. I think folks who shake a preacher’s hand still perish. I still think that people who are baptized still perish. I think that people that get religion still perish.

I think that people who turn over a new leaf and reform their ways can still perish. My friend; I am telling you this; a man will never perish if Christ died for him. No sir; my faith is not perfect but His is. My life is not perfect but His is. My works are not perfect but His are.

In His life, I have perfect holiness. In His death I have perfect justification. Not even a devil or an angel or the Father Himself can lay one thing to the charge of one for whom Christ died. If He died for us, how safe we must be and how secure we must be.

“Under the blood of Jesus
Safe in the Shepherd’s fold,

Under the blood of Jesus,
Safe while the ages roll.

Safe, though the world may crumble,
Safe, though the stars grow dim,

If I am under the blood of Jesus,
I am secure in Him.”

“He laid down His life for us.” He laid down His life for me and I am safe and secure!