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A SHORT SERMON FROM A FAMILIAR TEXT

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

We learned this text so long ago, some of us in childhood, and have heard it so often, that we are now apt to read or hear it without noticing its breadth and depth.

"God so loved."

Is this true? Orthodoxy says it was Jesus that so loved the world. The Father did not love them; no, he was angry, very angry with them, because Satan was too smart for him [We feel ashamed to have to write such an idea]; but Jesus loved us, and threw himself between us and his angry Father, and thus received the fatal blow; at least it would have been fatal to us, but Jesus being God, could not really die, and so arose when he wished to.

How much better to believe that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners [enemies, verse 10] Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.) "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.)

"God so loved the WORLD."

What! the world? the whole world? This would be blessed news indeed, if true. How is it? The nominal church teaches that only those who believe before the second coming of Christ – probably not one in one thousand of the world's inhabitants so far – can be saved. God's Word tells us that through the Abrahamic seed shall "all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:3.) What if the promise has not been fulfilled as yet? Can we not wait God's time? Paul tells us that God

"will have ALL men to be saved [from the Adamic death] and to come unto a knowledge of the truth." What truth? That Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for ALL, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2:4,6.)

"He gave his only-begotten Son."

This phraseology brings us into conflict with an old theory, viz., Trinitarianism. If that doctrine is true, how could there be any Son to give? A begotten Son, too? Impossible. If these three are one, did God send himself? And how could Jesus say: "My Father is greater than I." (John 14:28.)

"Whosoever believeth in him."

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and the promises are only to believers. But does it seem reasonable that God so loved the world and yet made provision for only one out of a thousand, allowing the rest to remain in heathenism to perish? The Word says: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14.) They could not, but our loving Father has provided a teacher in that glorious Anointed One – Head and body – who is the true Light which lighteth EVERY MAN that cometh into the world." And thus shall all men "come unto a knowledge of the truth." Understanding this, Paul could say: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached [R406 : page 4] before the gospel [good news] unto Abraham, saying: "In thee shall all nations be blessed." (Gal. 3:8.)

This is good news indeed.

"Should not perish, but have everlasting life."

So-called orthodoxy would paraphrase this sentence thus: Should not live forever in hell, but have everlasting life in heaven. Webster gives the primary meaning of "perish" as "to die, to lose life

in any manner." But, says some one, Jesus did not speak English, and the translators may not have given us a good equivalent for the Greek. Well, Liddell and Scott define the original word "to destroy utterly, kill, slay, murder." The text really defines its own meaning by placing "perish" as the opposite of "life." Life, everlasting or eternal, is promised only to the pure. Our Father intends to have a clean universe, and has commissioned the Son to do the work for him. This he will do, throwing light into every dark corner, washing, scouring, and polishing every vessel that can be made available for the Master's use, hanging every one in its proper place, sweeping out and "utterly destroying" the rubbish, but evidently saving and blessing with life everlasting by far the greater portion of mankind, so that the saved will be the rule, and the lost the exception – else would Satan triumph over God, which is impossible.

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