

The Greatest Story Ever Told

by Oswald J. Smith

Oswald J. Smith emphasizes God's universal love and the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation in 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'.

Duration: 19:19

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 1:1-3, Romans 6:23, 1 Peter 2:24

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that salvation starts with God, not with man. God's love for the world led Him to give His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for the sins of humanity. This act of love and sacrifice is the greatest story ever told. The preacher also references the story of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness as a parallel to Jesus being lifted up on the cross, offering salvation to all who believe in Him.

Transcript

Behold in my hand here a book. You recognize it as the Word of God, the Bible. This is without doubt the greatest book in the world.

There never has been a book like it. The greatest part of this book is the New Testament. The greatest book in the New Testament is the Gospel according to John.

The greatest chapter in the Gospel according to John is the third chapter. And the greatest verse in the third chapter is the 16th verse. 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.

That, I say, is the greatest verse in the Bible, and therefore I'm preaching this morning on the greatest story ever told. Now the previous two verses introduce the 16th verse. In the 14th verse we have these words, For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

Hundreds of years ago the Israelites were bitten, as you know, by serpents. They cried to Moses for relief. God told Moses to erect a pole, and on that pole to fasten a brass serpent.

And Moses did so. I can imagine two men there in Israel having been bitten by serpents lying side by side. I can imagine them dying as many did during that awful plague.

I can imagine Moses standing there beside them and crying out to them, Look! Look! Look at the serpent! The serpent of brass on the pole! And I can imagine one of those two men refusing to look, saying to himself, What's the use? How can a serpent on a brass pole provide curing for a man who has been bitten by a serpent? Why, it's ridiculous. It's absolutely impossible. It's too simple a remedy.

And he turns over, and a few moments later he passes into eternity. I can imagine Moses crying out to the other man in desperation again, Look! Look! Look! And I can imagine the other man turning and glancing at that serpent of brass on the pole there before him. And instantly he is cured.

The serpent bites have no more effect on him. He rises to his feet perfectly well, having been completely cured just because he obeyed the instructions given by God to Moses. He looked, and as the hymn says, There is life for a look at the crucified one.

There is life at this moment for thee. Then look, sinner, look unto him and be saved, unto Jesus, unto Christ, who died on the tree. And every man from that day to this who has been willing to look has been saved if you look in faith at the representation of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross, the serpent representing sin, because your sin and my sin 1900 years ago was laid on the sinless head of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He bore it in his own body on the tree. And all you and I have to do is to look. And when we look in faith at Jesus Christ there on Calvary's cross for us, we are healed of the bite of the serpent.

We're delivered from sin. There is no penalty. We're saved, and saved for time and for eternity.

Now that introduces us to the 16th verse, the greatest story ever told. There are four statements in this verse, and I want you to look at these four statements one by one. If you will, you'll never forget it as long as you live.

Here's the first statement. God so loved the world. The first word in that statement is the word God.

Salvation starts with God. Salvation does not start with man. Man is not seeking God.

God is seeking man. And only because God seeks man does man finally respond as he is influenced by the Holy Spirit and turn to God. God so loved the world.

It doesn't say God loved the good. It doesn't say God loved the righteous. The world is made up of sinners of every kind.

It is made up of good and of bad. It is made up of black and white. It is made up of all humanity throughout the entire world.

And it's that world, a world of sinful men and a world of sinful women that God loved when he allowed his only begotten son to hang there on Calvary's cross 1900 years ago. For God so loved the world. And God loves every man in the world.

God loves every woman in the world. God loves every boy in the world. God loves every girl in the world.

God loves the heathen in the world. God loves the civilized nations in the world. God's love is universal for God loves the entire world.

God so loved the world. That's the first statement in the verse. Here's the second verse, the second statement, that he gave his only begotten son.

Now love gives. If there isn't giving, there isn't love. Love is expressed by giving.

And the man who loves is the man who gives. And the woman who loves is the woman who gives. Love, I say, is expressed by giving.

And when God loved, God gave. He didn't give an angel. He didn't give Gabriel.

He did not give Michael. He did not give one of the archangels of heaven. He gave his nearest.

He gave his best. He gave his son, his only begotten son. You and I could have understood it had he given an angel.

But God didn't do that. When God gave, he gave his best. God gave his son his only begotten son, the only son he ever had, the only son he ever will have.

He gave his son to die on Calvary's cross for you and for me. And Jesus, Jesus came down from the realms above to this earth below. Here he gave his life for your sins and for my sins.

Otherwise, there wouldn't have been any hope for us. Otherwise, we would have perished. Otherwise, we would have been lost.

Otherwise, we never could have been saved. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, the only son he ever had. He gave him that he might die on Calvary's cross for you and for me.

That's the second great statement in this verse. That's why I call it the greatest story ever told. What about the third statement, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, whosoever believeth in him.

Let me pause for a moment on that tremendous word, whosoever. That word gives us assurance. That word gives us certainty.

That word includes us because it includes the black, and includes the red, and includes the brown, and includes the white, and includes the men, and includes the women, and includes the boys, and includes the girls, includes the good, and includes the bad, includes every individual on the face of the earth, whosoever. If God had said that he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that Mr. Brown or Mr. Jones, if he had put in some proper name, that would have excluded everybody else. But he didn't.

He put in a word, whosoever, that includes everybody, good and bad, man and woman, king and serf. Everyone is included in that one word, whosoever. And my friend, I want you to realize out there in radio land, out there in television land, I want you to realize that you're included.

I don't care who you are. I don't care what you have done. I don't care how bad you have been.

I don't care how wicked you have lived. I don't care what kind of a life you have lived. God includes you, for he includes every man, every woman, every boy, every girl on the face of this earth.

That's the meaning of the word whosoever, whosoever. One of the greatest words to be found in the word of God, that whosoever, whosoever what, whosoever works hard enough, whosoever labors hard enough,

whosoever is good enough, whosoever can meet my ideals, whosoever can rise to a certain height, whosoever can do this, whosoever can do that. Is that what it says? There isn't a word, there isn't a condition, aside from one thing, whosoever believeth.

And that's the only word, believeth. If you know anything about the word believeth in the word of God, you know that the word believe means to trust, means to put your faith in someone, means to rely upon someone, means to hand yourself over to another, means to put your trust in someone else, whosoever, believeth, believeth, believeth. My friend out there in television land, has there ever been a time in your life when you have believed? Has there ever been a time in your life when you have knelt down before God and you have expressed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever done it? Or have you simply had an intellectual belief? An intellectual belief that has never touched your heart, that has never reached your heart, that has never changed your life, that has never meant anything to you? A belief of the intellect rather than a faith of the heart.

It's the heart that must believe. It's the whole man who must come to Jesus Christ. Whosoever believeth.

Have you ever believed? If you have never believed, if you have never trusted, you are not yet saved. You're still in your sins. You're still lost.

You're still perishing. And not until you put your faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, will you be saved. But let me say out there in television land, at this moment, while I'm speaking, you can put your faith in Jesus Christ.

You can trust Him this moment. And the very moment you trust Him as your Savior, you will pass out of death and into life. Because God says that whosoever believeth in Him.

Now let me point out that you have to believe in a person. You'll never be saved until you believe in a person. But you say, I'm a good man.

That isn't what it says. I'm a good woman. That isn't what it says.

I'm doing the best I can. That isn't what it says. I'm performing good works the way it states it.

It says whosoever believeth in Him, in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. And my friend, you never will be saved. And you never can be saved until you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A person. The one who came from heaven above to earth below. The one who hung on Calvary's cross.

The one who bore your sins in His own body on the tree. The one who dies that you might live. Not until you put your trust and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will you be saved.

I believe there are men and women out there in radio land who want to know Jesus Christ as their Savior. You realize that you're facing the future. Death is not very far away for some of you.

There are those who are getting up in years, and you know as well as I do, that a transaction of some kind has to take place in that heart, in that life of yours. If you're going to leave this world and spend your eternity with God in heaven, you've got to act. You've got to do something about it.

My friend, you can never act sooner. You can never be saved earlier. Now is the day of salvation.

Now is the accepted time. This is your opportunity. And today, wherever you are out there in radio land, you can slip away to your bedroom.

You can kneel down on your knees. You can open your heart to Jesus Christ, and right here and now you can receive Him as your own personal Savior. Your heart may be closed like that.

You may never have opened it in your life in spite of the fact that you have lived a good life. There must come a moment when you open your heart like that to Jesus Christ and invite Him to come in and save you. And in that moment you'll pass out of death and into life.

I've experienced it. I know what I'm talking about. My friends, you can experience it.

And then you can give your testimony and let everybody know that you have passed out of death into life and that you've been saved through Jesus Christ. Listen again, as I quote the greatest story ever told. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, now what's the result? What's going to happen? Should not perish.

Should not perish, but have everlasting life. That's why it's such a great verse, because of what it promises you. If you will put your personal trust this morning in the Lord Jesus Christ, God says you'll never perish.

You'll never perish, should not perish. You say, Dr. Smith, what does it mean to perish? How can I tell you what it means to perish? I'm never going to perish. I'm never going to know what it means to perish.

I put my faith in Jesus Christ. I did it when I was only 16 years of age. I never repented of it.

And Christ has been my Savior from that day to this. Therefore, I'm not going to perish. I don't know what it means to perish.

It must be awful. Must be dreadful. I know one thing.

It means separation from God. Separation from God. What that separation implies, I cannot say.

But I do know that if you perish, you will be eternally separated from God. And my friends, that ought to be sufficient to turn you to Jesus Christ, so that you may put your trust in Him and never perish. You want to perish? You want to be lost? God says you will perish, unless you trust Jesus Christ.

You should not perish, but have everlasting life. And life everlasting is yours, if you will accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior.

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