

# The Fact of God's Love

by Paris Reidhead

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*God's love for the world is the foundation of his relationship with humanity and the basis for his salvation plan.*

**Duration:** 30:34

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:26, Numbers 21:8-9, Matthew 6:33, John 3:7, John 3:16, Romans 8:3

**Topics:** "Love Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on their experience of being called to pastor a Presbyterian church in Osacus, Minnesota many years ago. They prayed about what message to deliver and chose John 3:16 as their verse. The speaker discusses the concepts of penalty, privilege, resolve, and moral government in relation to the law. They emphasize that the law is given out of love and is meant to protect society. The speaker also addresses the concept of the Trinity, using the analogy of light consisting of three different rays to explain the nature of God.

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## Transcript

Turn, if you will, please, to John chapter 3, and our verse for today is verse 16. However, I want to read, beginning with verse 14 to verse 17. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.

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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but the world through him might be saved. About forty-eight years ago, having reached the rightful age of eighteen, I was called to a pastor of a church, a Presbyterian church, in Osakis, Minnesota.

Well, not really Osakis. Long prayer. Well, halfway between Osakis.

Long prayer. It was just a little country church. And I prayed a great deal about what I would give.

And, of course, the verse was John 3, 16. And I remember the week after I returned to get ready to move, to spend the summer, the first month of the fall there, that my cousin, who was a Methodist minister, said, I suppose last Sunday you spoke on John 3, 16. And I said, how did you know? Oh, he said, you Bible school students, that's the only verse you know of in the Bible.

Well, I said, I think I know of one or two others, but I didn't know a better one with which to begin a ministry than John 3, 16. And I thought at the time, and I'm sure at the time, that the verse meant a great deal to

me. But for 48 years, I've been preaching from time to time on John 3, 16.

And I think if I could have another 48, I might begin to understand what the verse means. It's so full, so rich, why every word. The fact that it's love in that first clause.

For God so loved the world. Think of it. Just look at each word, or at least feel it.

God. What do we know about God? The God of the Bible. Aren't you glad that Genesis, the first chapter of the first verse, begins the way it did? In the beginning, God.

If the Bible had set out to prove the existence of God, I would know that it was engineered by man. That it was not inspired by God. You see, because God exists, he does not have to prove his existence.

And so it simply begins, in the beginning, God. Elohim, the self-existent one who reveals himself. And then it proceeds to state that this God can speak of himself as us.

And we let us make man in our image. And so, we are introduced to the fact that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, very difficult for a great many people to understand this.

I've heard some illustrations that are designed to help me. I don't think they did. Perhaps you have.

Someone has said, well it's like ice and water and steam. Three manifestations of H<sub>2</sub>O. Well, what that illustration may convey is lost in the confusion that it brings.

God is not like ice, water, and steam. That does not illustrate the Trinity. But the Scripture does say God is light.

Some years ago, up at Glenrocks, I was speaking to this point. Trying to illustrate for purposes that were to come in the message. Something about the nature of God in his tri-human being.

And in the congregation was a man who had spent his life as a physicist working with light. And he said, you know, it may be helpful to realize that light has comprised three different rays. They're all light, but they're quite separate.

Yet the light is never light unless all three are present. And I recall the word he used. I got all my physics from men who came to me after the congregation to correct my science.

Or from the Reader's Digest, one or the other of my authority sources. So you'll understand when I speak about science, I'm displaying my ignorance and not proving my erudition. But he said that light has in it three rays.

Wherever you have light, you have those. The luminiferous, which you would understand to mean the ones in the lumen. And the calorific, which are the ones that provide the heat.

And the actinic. I don't know what in the world they do, but they're there. I know they spoil a lot of photography because they weren't properly measured and prepared for it.

The actinic rays, and the calorific rays, and the luminiferous rays. Well, that helped illustrating the Trinity. God is light, perhaps a little.

Each has its own function, but they're still part of life, regardless. Whether you're helped by the illustration. Remember, if God did not go beyond just telling us that we should be content.

We know that God is Father. But God is not manifest only as Father. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And God is Son. The Son is God. But God is not manifest only as Son.

He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is God. But God is not manifest only as Holy Spirit.

He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, wherever God is manifest as Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are there. Wherever God is manifest as Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit are there.

And wherever God is manifest as Holy Spirit, the Son and the Father are there. Now, that you have to understand to the degree that any of us are able, because it proves us something about God. Now, we do find distinct ministries.

For instance, we find in John, the first chapter, all things were made by him, by hope, by the Word, by the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. He was the agent of creation, the Lord Jesus.

Very frequently, we attribute creation to the Father. Well and good, I used to take exception to it when I heard it, because it wasn't perfect, but it's nonetheless true. But God the Son is the agent of creation.

And if they want to attribute it to the Father, I'm certain either Son or Father or the Holy Spirit will be offended by it. But still, it was God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, who each in his distinct ministry, present where the other is manifest, where the Spirit is there, the Son and the Father, where the Son is there, the Spirit of the Father, where the Father is manifest there, the Son of the Spirit. So we're talking about God.

And God the Creator. And we are told that God loves. That's the next word in the text.

But you see, that is what we have read in 1 John, the fourth chapter, isn't it? God is love. Now the scripture tells us very clearly that God is eternal. He's a self-existent one who reveals himself.

He is the eternal God. He never had beginnings. He has always been as glorious and as powerful as he is.

He didn't mature. He's always been. When I was a student at the University of Minnesota years ago, I had some professors that knew that I also was a pastor of a church, the same little church I was telling you about.

And they took great pleasure in trying to destroy my naïve, childish Bible school fundamentalist faith. And they took pleasure in it, this one professor particularly. And he would sort of just snipe at everything.

You know, some of the professors like that, spy, arrogant, contemptuous people. At any rate, it got to me after a while. It really did.

You take that for a while, and I said, well, maybe I am naïve. Maybe I have been sold to filigree. Maybe it is.

And so I said, well, I think I better just put the whole thing on hold for a little while, and I'm going to read the Bible again and see what God says to me. I've been taught in all these years. Now I better just do a

little self-study.

And so I set myself to find out by reading the Scripture whether or not to do so. And I started where you logically expect to start, with Genesis 1, verse 1. And I read the first four words. In the beginning, God.

And I never got beyond those first four words. I stayed with them at least two weeks in some of the hardest concentration and thinking that I've ever done in my life. And at the end of that period of time, I concluded that if I could accept the first four words of the Bible, that I would never have a problem with anything else in the Bible.

If I could believe that there was one who had existed apart from dependence upon all others, no other system was necessary for his existence, no other being, no other source of sustenance, no other source of strength, he was utterly and totally complete in himself. So, if I could accept the first four words of the Bible, I would never have a problem with anything that followed. And I even went so far as to say if Jonah, the book of Jonah had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would have had no problem with it.

I just said, well, if he can support himself and exist apart from all others, then he can fix Jonah so he can swallow a whale. It didn't say that, of course, but the other way around, I have never had any problem with the word of God sent. Why? Because I discovered that the God of the Bible existed before there was a speck of dust to clutter up his glorious vast, empty universe.

And then, in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. The Lord Jesus was the agent of that creation. By him were all things made.

And later we are told by him are all things held together. And he did it in love. Because he is love.

He self-existed. He is eternal. He has all power.

And he never changed. There wasn't a time when God began to be love. There wasn't a time when he said, well, that looks like a pretty good attribute.

I'll take it, too. He's always been all that he is. Now, you have to understand, therefore, that when he created the universe, it was in love.

He had a love purpose. Oh, we're talking about a word and we haven't defined it. We've got to stop that, haven't we? Remember, in times past, we've talked about love? What it is? And we have said that love is not an emotion.

Love is not a sensibility or a feeling. Love has to do with the will, with the commitment of the will. That love is the choice and purpose that a being makes to seek the highest good and blessedness and joy and happiness of others and of oneself.

As there is an appropriate self-love. So, when God created the world, he did it in love. And when he created all that inhabits this planet, he did it in love.

Love is benevolence. Love is the seeking of the highest good for the greatest number. And so, when he created, he did it with that commitment of his will, that purpose of his perfect, to seek the highest good of the universe, including himself and all others.

Now, when he made man, he made man in love. Now, let's look for a moment. God is love.

He has always been love. As father, God is love. As son, God is love.

As Holy Spirit, God is love. God as father from the beginning of time before time had no beginning, has always been love. And as father, he has always yearned and longed for children.

Because love is never complete without an offspring. And as son, the son has yearned for brethren. As eternal bridegroom, he has yearned for a bride.

Why? Because love always wants someone that understands the love, that needs the love, and that can return the love in such a way as to satisfy the heart of the one who loves. So from eternity past, complete and glorious and perfect in all of his being, and yet God had an ancient longing as father for children, as brother for brethren, bridegroom for a bride. So he made that.

It is image and it is likeness. Why? Because we can only love that which is like ourselves. Only a being that was like God, that had the ability to think and to feel and to will, had intelligence and emotions and volition.

Only a being made in God's image. Not equal to him in attributes, no. But like him in kind.

For instance, we're microcosms of God. When I was living in Chattanooga, one of my friends in church was at combustion engineering. And he took me down to see the place of business.

Right there in the lobby was a model of a large electric generating plant. And he said, this plant is made perfectly to scale, and it's cost us at that time, that's a long while ago, about \$500,000 of the client's money. Why do you make it to scale? He said, because it's a lot cheaper to correct our mistakes in scale than it is to correct them in full scale.

So we make it here absolutely to scale. Well, in a sense, that's what he made man, a model of himself, a working model. God thinks, God feels, and God will.

So he made man. Just like he could have made man an automaton, a machine, who didn't think and didn't choose, but he wouldn't have been like God, and he couldn't have met the need of God's heart for a beloved. But making man that way had a risk with it.

And the risk would be that with that intelligence and imagination, man would turn his love away from God and in upon himself. But nevertheless, it was in love that God created the world. And it was in love that God made man.

And it was in love, seeking the highest good for the greatest number, that God made man capable of turning his love away from God and in upon himself. But notice it also said God so loved the world. There are four words used for world.

One is from which we get our word geography, which means the land, terra firma, soil. And then there's another one which has reference to time, the world of time, everything that has a beginning and ending. And there's another word that has population, people that live on the world.

And then there's the world here, the word that's used here, which has reference to the land, which has reference to the people that inhabit the land, which has reference to the systems that the people that inhabit the land use and have, even the philosophies that they develop. And it's that last world, that cosmos, that God loved. He loved it.

By that, it means that his purpose from eternity past, in making it, had not changed. His concern had not deviated at all. He hadn't deflected from that original purpose, as father to have children, as bridegroom to have a bride.

And he loved the world that he created in love. And that he governed in love. Physically, he governed the planets that he made and kept them until time could be told by their movements.

And then he would let a Halley's Comet come along and sort of, what should we say, the street sweepers of the space to gather up all the plots of it, kept them as it were, and pull it around, come around every, whatever its purpose is, I don't know. But the point being that he got it all under marvelous physical control. He has that in the birds, in the animals.

There is this time clock that was put into the Harmony's. And the water buffalo told that when I was driving from a cobalt post to Balacal in the truck, I had to go through the migrating herds of the heart of these. And there were thousands of them.

In fact, when the district commissioner heard that I had driven through that migration, he just almost threw his, put me in, almost wanted to put me in jail for unnecessary risk. Because they had something within them that just drew them and pulled them. And when they came to the truck, they would try to push the truck out of the way, instead of go around it.

One time there were several under the side of it and it started to tilt. And I, once I honked the horn and pushed on the gas and started moving to get out of that one, because that was touching. What was it? There was something built in, covering these animals.

Instinct, you call it now, it was just that physical government that God had for everything. It didn't have moral capacity, but when it came to man, it wasn't government by the physical, but by moral. Moral government.

Thou shalt not to the mind. Penalty, privilege, resolve are yours. Penalty if you disobey.

Privilege and blessing, if you obey. Moral. Moral government.

The law was given to us. The law was given to protect all from others. See, the law is only a problem to the person that wants to break it.

To the person that keeps in its offense, to keep the thugs out. And of course, to the person who has the law less, it's offense to keep him from satisfying himself contrary to the will of God. No, the law was given in love.

It's the highest expression of benevolence that God could give for society, for man. God loved the world. God governed it by love.

By the highest good and greatest blessing and happiness for the largest number. But, as we find, all sin. In the previous verses, we were told, as Moses lifted up the serpents in the wilderness, Israel sinned.

And God, they broke God's law, and God sent the serpents into the camp as the children of Israel were bitten, and they died. You say, where is God's love now? Oh, yes, God is there. He has given sanctions, and sanctions are to be enforced in order to give the law the strength to protect.

But you see, even as they had sinned, and even as they were judged in love, where God is no less loving when he is righteous in his judgment, when he imposes the sanctions of his law, God has manifested his love by saying to Moses, take that raising serpent that the people were worshiping, twine it around the stick with a crosspiece on it, and raise it high above the camp. And everyone in Israel that's bitten by the serpent, that looks at that serpent on that stick raised above his head, will live. What did he do that for? Out of love for the world.

Oh, he gave the law in love. Thou shalt have no one but the cross before thee. Israel broke the law.

God sent serpents, the very thing that they were worshiping, in among them to destroy them, to judge them, to bring them to death. It says the soul of the sinner shall die. But then love found a way.

God had Moses raise that serpent that soul. John says, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so shall the son of God be born. You can meditate on those words.

Your ears are full. Your eyes failed. Your ears no longer hear.

But as long as your spirit is capable of following one word after another, your heart can be enriched by God's soul. The world, the fact of the world, by which all other rights fathered, we thank you, that we can see that all that thou hast done, thou hast done consistently by nature and character and love. Thou hast defined ways of upholding thy law, vindicating thy holiness, being just, and still the justifier of heaven and calling from the name of thy son, old father of Jesus, today.

May we take these first three words, this overly familiar word, and let them fill our hearts, what we know about me, what we know about love, and what we know about the world. Until somehow, arising above the familiar, the truth begins to seep again afresh into our hearts, God, soul, and blood. We ask you for thanksgiving.

Peace. Amen.

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