

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Johannine Theology,

Session 16, Salvation, God's Love

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Johannine Theology. This is session 16, Salvation, God's Love.

We continue our study of Johannine Theology, the teaching of the Gospel of John.

Having thought about many, many topics, including the church in John and the people of God, we now go to Salvation, and we desire to, what we plan, to look at different aspects of it. God's love, God's election, His choosing of people, eternal life. The few places where John talks about the Father drawing people to the Son, the teaching that on the last day, as the consummation of Salvation, Jesus will raise them up.

Also, the fact that Jesus will keep the people of God. So six different ways of viewing Salvation, the first of which is God's love. And we're back in John 3. John 3:16 through 21.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgment that light has come into the world, and people love darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

For God so loved the world, it might be the most popular verse in all of Scripture. Here is the way He loved the world, which He gave His only Son. We talked about the world a little bit before. It has numerous meanings in John's Gospel, and here, D.A. Carson argues in his book, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, that although it does speak of largeness, it is not so much a world so large as a world so bad.

The world in John is God's enemy. Well again, the word is ambiguous, sometimes it means the planet, the earth that God created, it's a good thing. Sometimes it refers to the people as here.

It also has connotations of the sinful world. First, John says that everything that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, is against God and opposed to God. Don't desire the world or the things of the world.

So, God loves a world that hates Him. We see it already in chapter 1, verse 5 of the prologue. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

It is true the word could be translated understood, it could be translated overcome. Older translations say the world has not understood it. We have talked about Johannine double meaning, double entendre, and some people think that's the situation here.

Because the world is against God, it opposes God, and they suggest the English word that has two meanings, mastered. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not mastered it. It means understood, as a child masters his spelling words, or her spelling words.

It means overcome, as the superior wrestler mastered his opponent on the mat. If I had to pick one, which I think maybe you do, I would do as the ESV has done. The light shines in the darkness.

In context, the revelation of God in the creation, shines into a post-fall sinful world. The word is the location of the eternal life. The eternal life present in the word, did I say world? The eternal life present in the word of God, the pre-incarnate Son, the second person of the Trinity, is the source of all the creation.

Verse 3, all things were made through him, without him, nothing was made. That in him was life, and that eternal life resident in the word alone was the light of men.

It was the shining of general revelation on human beings. The light shines in the darkness. It is of the very nature of the light to shine.

It's a, we call it a nomic present. And the darkness has not extinguished it, has not overcome it. It is this world that God loves, John 3.16. For God so loved the world that was so bad, that opposed him, that crucified his son, that he gave his only son.

God loved, and God gave. His giving demonstrated his love. We're told, oh, love is a characteristic of God, and it has nothing to do with it's not sentimentality; it has nothing to do with emotion.

Well, it's not sentimentality, but it involves emotion. Oh, granted, it's hard to talk about emotions with reference to God. I had a colleague who liked to talk about using the word theos for God.

God has emotions, not like ours, which are often fickle and even sometimes sinful. There is a godly human jealousy, where a husband or wife will not share their partner with somebody else. There is an ungodly jealousy of which we are very aware.

He called God's emotions, the emotions from theos. The meaning is, we're made like God. He loves, he hates, he's a jealous God.

He made us like him. Of course, since the fall, our emotions are skewed like the rest of our abilities and capacities, but his aren't.

And yes, love is one of his characteristics. It involves action, words, giving, and emotion. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

Here's the result of that giving that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Whoever is important, or older translations, whosoever. We don't talk like that anymore.

But the gospel of John, as strong as its sovereignty and salvation motif, is strong. And it is strong. We'll study divine election in our next lecture, Lord willing.

We'll see that God is absolutely sovereign in salvation, with the Father giving people to the Son, with the result that they do believe and they are saved. And the son keeps them. And we'll see that, as we said a couple of times already, uniquely in scripture, in John 15, verses 16 and 19, Jesus is the author of election.

Nowhere else is that true. Never is the Spirit the author. Usually it's the father, or simply the divine passive.

They were chosen, which would default to the father again. But in John 15, Jesus is the elector. You did not choose me, but I chose you.

Divine sovereignty. Thirdly, as we'll see in detail, looking at passages, a third Johannian theme of election is the antecedent, or prior identity of the people of God, and of those who are not the people of God. My sheep hear my voice.

They follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. A strong accent on sovereignty. Jesus keeps the sheep.

I give them eternal life. It is a gift, an eternal gift, and they will never perish. A categorical statement: Dan Wallace, a famous intermediate Greek grammar writer, intermediate and reference grammar writer, studied and does grammar by usage in context, which is tremendous.

He says it's the strongest way to say they will never perish, which is available in the New Testament language. So, sovereignty is all over the place, but that does not exclude genuine human responsibility, accountability, and culpability. And so, it is the church's job and individual believer's job, as God enables gifts and enables to present the gospel, the way of salvation, to whosoever will.

Because God so loved the world that he gave his unique son, that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. Whoever. Whoever.

We believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation. We also believe in God commanding us to give a free and universal offer to the gospel. Well, how can we do that knowing that God didn't choose everybody? We do it because God told us, and we do it because God has chosen to use means to accomplish his end.

1 Thessalonians one is instructive. We always give thanks to God for all of you, who constantly mention you in our prayers. 1 Thessalonians 1:3, remembering before our God and father, your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers, loved by God that he has chosen you. We know it because we probed deeply into the divine councils and figured out what God was doing before the creation. No, no.

We know it because our gospel came to you, not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. We only know someone is elect when they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They would not have believed otherwise, because those whom God chooses, he effectually calls or summons to himself.

To use John speak, those whom the father gives to the son, the father draws to the son. And so, we're not God. We don't choose.

We don't die on the cross, and we don't rise from the dead, although we will, but our resurrection is a result of Jesus' resurrection. His resurrection is the cause of ours.

We don't open our hearts to the gospel as the Holy Spirit does. The Trinity works together and has seen fit, as we saw in John 20, to use us in the power of the Spirit to share the gospel so that we might see God work in bringing people to himself in salvation. Whoever believes in Christ should not perish but have eternal life.

Language of perishing is one of the ways the Bible speaks of hell. It uses a number of metaphors. One of them is eternal death, destruction, and perishing.

Are these to be taken literally? Well, they're of real punishment, death, destruction, and perishing. But is the meaning, does it indicate a cessation, there's the word, of

existence for the lost? No. It is an eternal dying, the second death, an eternal perishing, an eternal suffering in hell.

But that is not God's plan. His plan is to save. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, John 3:17, but to save the world through him.

God loved the world that hated him, gave his son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but would have eternal life. This is a wonderful and amazing theme of John's gospel. Eternal life is, in terms of realized eschatology, the so-called already, the present possession of the believer.

In fact, if you count noses over and over again, eternal life in the gospel of John is now. 17:3 defines it. He defines it in relational terms.

This is eternal life, Jesus said in his high priestly prayer, that they, the ones you've given me, may know the father and the son. Eternal life is knowing the father and the son now. Eternal life is loving, delighting in, obeying, enjoying, serving the father, son, and spirit for all eternity as resurrected beings on the new earth.

John 3:16 is justly famous. God's proper work is to save, his strange work is to condemn, and those who don't believe in God's son have been condemned already. Once again, realized eschatology.

The verdicts of the last day, both positive and negative, are revealed ahead of time by the gracious and merciful God that believers might rejoice in their salvation and that unbelievers might see their need of a savior. God so loved the world. 13:1 carries on this theme.

Remember that the Book of Signs ends at the end of 12, where Jesus says twice, or where scripture says twice, John says his time had come. And look at how 13:1 begins. In the Book of Signs, the audience is the world, the Jews.

In the Book of Glory or Exaltation, chapters 13 to the end, the audience is the disciples. They go into the upper room, and Jesus closes the door to the world. Oh, and part of his preparation for the disciples is to train them to bring the gospel to the world.

But the audience is not the world. He's not doing signs and giving sermons before the world and receiving a response of unbelief largely and belief. He's speaking privately to his 12 disciples in the upper room in chapters 13 through 16.

In 17, he prays for himself, for his disciples, for the 11, and for those who will believe in him through the disciples. John 13:1, now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of the world to the Father, the time

says, keep time. It is true that John is an existential gospel, if by that you mean it is as if Jesus is speaking directly to my heart.

That's right. So that means it's existential in the sense that it's removed from time and space, right? Wrong. The feasts that John records, the Passover in chapter two, the Passover in chapter six, the feast of dedication, tabernacles in chapter seven, the feast of dedication in chapter 10, these, and then the Passover in the Farewell Discourses, mark time.

They move redemptive history along. So do the time sayings, at least those that say, my time is not yet come, his time had not yet come, and on and on. And then at the end of 12, his time had come.

And 13:1, Jesus knew his hour had come, his time had come, hour and time are synonymous, to depart out of the world to the Father. Listen to the first thing it says, having loved his own who were in the world. Yes, he loves the world, John 3.16. But here, it's not talking about that.

It's talking about his loving the people the father gave him. He loved them to the end. Johannian scholars detect double meaning here.

Surely it pertains to the word verses that follow. And he shows love for them by extraordinarily taking the role of a servant, it would be it was embarrassing. It would be embarrassing.

I liken it to parishioners inviting their pastor and his wife over for dinner. At some point in the meal, the pastor says, "I would like to clean your bathroom." What housewife? What parishioner would allow that? The pastor says, "I have to clean your toilet."

I don't, I don't think so, Pastor. No. They don't regard people as better than anybody else.

But that menial task is not for the pastor, who's a guest in your home and to whom you're serving a meal. And probably no pastor would say something as outlandish anyway, but it gets the point across, I think, that it was socially really wrong for the rabbi to wash the feet of the students. As a matter of fact, the students didn't even do that for the rabbi.

So, when John the Baptist says, the one coming after me was before me, he's higher than me in rank. I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. That is extreme language.

John is saying, "The Messiah." I'm not the Messiah. I'm not Elijah. I'm not the prophet Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 18.

I am so far below the Messiah that I'm not even qualified to relate to him as the most menial of servants relates to those over him, which is everybody else in the house. I'm not, I can't even do that. It was not John's fault that the John the Baptist sect was developed.

Oh, my goodness. It was definitely not his fault. He had no presumption or self-promotion, just the opposite.

In 13:1, Jesus shows his love for his disciples by loving them to the end, which means, in this extreme example, washing their dirty tootsies. But readers and scholars cannot help but think it also means the end of his life, laying down his life for his friends. And indeed, that's what he does.

He washes their feet. Peter cracks me up. He has such a consistent character throughout the gospel.

Oh my, he and John both run to the tomb. Apparently, John is faster. John hesitates as any normal human being would whom Peter zooms right in there.

Oh, my goodness. Ah, he blurred stuff out, but these gifts that God gave him were tamed by the spirit and by his own betraying his master and restitution in John 21 by Jesus. And he still was bold.

Oh, was he bold! And he still was a leader. Most of the time when Jesus answered the time in the gospels, when Jesus talked to the disciples, Peter answered that he was the leader.

That's just his gift. Well, now in the book of Acts, he becomes a leader for great good. And it is remarkable.

Those same qualities are led by the spirit, tamed by the spirit, and empowered by the spirit. And God uses him in amazing ways. Jesus does two things in the washing of feet episode.

He shows his love for the disciples by teaching them in this painful way for them that they need the daily confession of sins. They're clean. They're there.

They had a bath once and for all, and they're forgiven, but their dust, the roads of Palestine were dusty, and the sandals made the feet dirty. And so, 1 Timothy 5, the list of widows who are worthy and who deserve the coat, the church's support. She has washed the saints feet.

It was a, a humble act on the part of a woman inviting people into her home to wash their feet. Jesus does that, showing them the need, not for a bath, but for the one who, who has bathed John 13:10, does not need to wash except for his feet, but it's completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.

Wouldn't that have bothered you? He's referring to Judas because he knew who was to betray him. That's why he said not all of you were clean. There's too much going on.

They're too excited. They miss it is all I can say, but he also gave them an example in this same action. So, it's an illustration of the need for daily cleansing.

And it is also an example of humble self self effacing service for one another. If I, your teacher and Lord have washed your feet, you want to do the same for one another. Nobody had volunteered to do that.

Later in chapter 13, we have beautiful words from Jesus testifying of God's love for his people: John 13:34, and 35, 31. When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. There are many uses of glorification. One of John's stylistic features is repetition.

Little children get a little while I'm with you. You will seek me. And just as I said to the Jews.

So now I also say to you where I'm going, you cannot come. They cannot go immediately to the father in heaven, a new commandment. I give to you that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another by this. All people will know that you're my disciples. If you have love for one another, this is beautiful.

Here's Jesus' famous love commandment. I'm going to leave you. You can't follow me right now.

Your emphasis should be on loving one another. The measure of their love for one another is incredible. As I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

And in fact, the mutual love of believers is part of their witness to the world. By this, all people will know you're my disciples. If you have love for one another, they're doing what Jesus did for them.

They're even passing it on to one another. John doesn't have quite the emphasis of the synoptics on loving one's enemies. But here they are, to be sure, to show love for one another.

In chapter 15, in The Vine and the Branches, the fruit is not listed as evangelism or the results of evangelism. Is that an application? Of course, it is. But the fruit is answered prayer, obedience, joy, and love for one another.

John 15:8, by this, my father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. Genuine branches in the vine bear fruit because they have eternal life. No fruit, no eternal life.

Once again, I'll say it, that's merciful. Because if a hearer looks at his or her life and sees zero fruit, it's a very bad sign and it might drive them to Christ. As the father has loved me, John 15:9, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love. What does that look like? If you keep my commandments, you'll abide in my love just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.

It sounds very much like 1 John, where believing the truth, living a righteous life, and loving one another are so intertwined, they all go together, obviously. They're all, to use this language, they are all fruit of abiding in the vine, Jesus. 1 John says, remaining and continuing in him, he uses abide in that way, but not this vineyard imagery per se.

This is my commandment, verse 12, skipping over the statement about joy, full joy, that you love one another as I have loved you. What a standard. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command. A mark of believers is love for one another. It is how the world, one way the world will know, one of the early pagans said of the Christians, behold how they love one another.

We see it in 16 as well. A time's going to come when I'm not going to speak in parables and riddles and in cryptic sayings, but I'll tell you plainly about my father, John 16:25. In that day, you can ask the Father on your own.

For the Father, verse 27 of chapter 16, for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I love it. Pardon the pun, unintended pun.

It's great. They loved him. That is good to know because it doesn't always seem like it.

They believed. That's good to know, too, because it doesn't always seem like it. The Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

I came from the father and have now come and have come into the world. And now I'm leaving the world and going to the father. Now you're speaking plainly.

We're so excited about that. Ah, the father loves those who love his son, who they don't become believers by loving his son. They believe.

One of the consequences is not only holiness but loving the Son of God. In chapter 17, the great priestly prayer also contains notes of love, as shown in verse 20.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me, Father, through their word, their witness, that they may all be one. Just as your Father is in me and I am in you, they also may be in us. That the world may believe that you've sent me.

The glory that you've given me. I have given to them. That is an astonishing statement.

It speaks of a present sense and already sense of glorification. We rightly think of glorification as not yet. But my thesis after thinking about these things for many, many years is every major feature of last things is already and not yet.

It's fulfilled already in part, with a greater fulfillment in the future. And here it is—here is present glorification.

That they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them. Here's the father's love again, even as you loved me.

The measure of the father's love for the people of God is the father's love for the son. These things are too high for us. Who can attain to them? It is no wonder people reading the high priestly prayer have come to faith.

Oh, it's not. It's not easy. It's not if the gospel of John is a river in which a child can wait, an elephant can swim.

It's got some elephantine parts. But as the temple police found when they didn't bring Jesus into the Jewish leaders in chapter seven, where is he? They said, no man ever spoke as this man spoke. No, he didn't.

Because this man is uniquely the divine human revealer of God, when he speaks, he speaks the words of God, even these words.

There's a mutual indwelling of the son in believers, 23, the first part, and the Father in the son. So, the world may believe in the incarnate Christ, and the world may know the worldlings who believe that the Father loved them as he loved his beloved son. It is an amazing thing.

We will continue to take up more of the aspects of salvation in our next lecture, but this will do for now. Thank you for your good attention.

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