WATCHMAN NEE

God is Willing

Living Stream Ministry

GOD IS WILLING

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Scripture Reading: John 3:16

Most people in this world do not like to be misunderstood. Sometimes good intentions can be misunderstood as bad intentions, or love can be misunderstood as hatred. There are many undesirable things in this world, and being misunderstood is certainly one of them. However, the most misunderstood One in the whole world is God! The misunderstanding we experience is only a fraction of what God experiences. He is the most misunderstood One in the whole world!

I read a story in the newspaper a few days ago. There was a so-called pastor who was a very aged man. One day he met a young man on the street who said, "Oh, a terrible thing has happened to me!" While he was speaking, tears began to fall. The pastor asked him what was the matter. He replied, "Terrible!" and then he cried. When the young man was asked again, he brought out a letter from his pocket and said, "This was mailed to me from a lawyer." The pastor asked, "Have you read it?" He answered, "Not yet. I dare not read it because I am afraid something unusual has happened. Lawyers' notices never bring good news." The pastor replied, "Read the letter, and find out what has happened." The young man answered, "It is bad luck for anyone to receive a letter from a lawyer. I do not like to receive a lawyer's letter." The pastor offered, "Well, let me read it for you." The young man agreed. After the pastor read the letter, he asked the young man, "You really have not read this letter?" The young man replied, "No." The pastor then told him, "This letter is to notify you that one of your relatives has died and left you an inheritance. The executor is at a certain place now, and you may go there and receive more

than twenty thousand dollars." Brothers and sisters, our attitude toward God is just like this young man's. When we hear the name God, we do not like it and feel uneasy. It seems as if God is hard to deal with and does not have good intentions toward men. There are two groups of people sitting here today. One group has heard about God and believed in the Lord Jesus. The other group has not believed in God and in the Lord Jesus. I know that those who have believed can give a testimony that before they believed in God, the very name God or Jesus would make them unhappy. They were like the young man who did not want to read the lawyer's letter. But after they truly believed, they all wished that they had believed earlier. The profit one receives in believing in Jesus is far better than receiving an inheritance. What God has said is much better than what the lawyer said to the young man. God's Word tells us that those who believe in the Lord Jesus will go to heaven and have eternal life. I also can give the same testimony. Today the first thing I will exhort you to do is not be afraid of hearing about God. Do not think that God has bad intentions toward you. If you are willing to listen and if you hear what I say, you will know what kind of God He is.

A number of years ago, as I was preaching in Southeast Asia, I met a child. I told him to believe in Jesus. He said, "Mr. Nee, I can be friends with you, but believing in Jesus is not a good thing to do." When I met him the second time I again asked him to believe in Jesus. He answered me the same way. I then asked him why he thought this way. He said, "I had a brother who believed in Jesus when he was six years old, and then he died. If I believe in Jesus and then die just like my brother, what good is it to me?" Oh, he misunderstood God! How did he misunderstand God? He misunderstood God's heart! Please close your eyes and think for a moment about how you view God? You may think God has a black face and is evil and strict. You may think that God wants to see man sin and go to hell. What is your idea about God?

Once I met a relative of mine. He had a Ph.D. and was a professor at Manchuria University. I exhorted him to believe in the Lord Jesus at that time. He said, "Your God is not good. Your God does nothing good in heaven. From heaven He records the evil deeds of this person and that person. He does it like bookkeeping, and He uses this book to judge and condemn people to hell. Your God does not have a good heart. All He does in heaven is record the evil deeds of all kinds of people. His heart is very devious, and He wishes men to go to hell." Oh, he misunderstood God! He misunderstood God's heart. You may think, "God hates me. He does not want me to be saved; He is anxiously

waiting to condemn me and bring me to perdition; He wants me to go to hell." However, I must tell you today that I know my God! My message today is to tell you one thing; if you really understand the message, you will not give up this God. Now I beg you to listen to the Word of God.

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world"! God is love. Please pay attention: God is love! It is so wonderful that God is not only thinking about you, caring for you, paying attention to you, and being merciful to you, He also loves you. A few days ago I was strolling in a park and met a classmate of mine. I asked him to believe in Jesus. I continually exhorted him, but he would not accept. In the end I almost burst into tears. If he only knew how loving God is toward him! Men very easily misunderstand God's love! You might think, "What kind of God is this God? Does He want to save me? Can He save a person like me?" Men are always full of doubts. But God not only is merciful toward you, He not only cares for you and pays attention to you, He also loves you. Throughout the ages, the most difficult thing God has done is love men. After man sinned, the first thing God did was love. God is full of good intention toward men. He is anxious for men to be saved. You may think that He is fierce and vicious and that He likes to see you far away from Him. But God gave us this book, the Bible, the Word of God, which tells us that God is love! Even though you are a sinner, God loves you. Even though you are far away from God, He loves you. Time after time, God sent His servants to tell men about His intentions. He said, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, / That she would not have compassion on the son of her womb? / Even though they may forget, / Yet I will not forget you" (Isa. 49:15). Oh, He so loved us. He once used a good illustration: "If a man divorces his wife / And she goes from him / And becomes another man's wife, / Will he return to her again? / Will not that land be / Utterly polluted? But you have committed fornication with many lovers. / Yet return to Me" (Jer. 3:1). Oh, God is so willing to accept sinners. But men do not believe that God loves the world. They always doubt that God can be so nice. But I have to say that God is love! God so loved the world that He decided that He Himself would come to the earth and become flesh in order to show men His love.

Once I went to Lushan Mountain. I like the flowers and birds on that mountain. I do not like to place birds in cages; I like to see them flying freely. One day the birds came and ate up all the rice I left on the railing. This was very interesting, and I went and got a whole bowl of rice. As soon as I walked close to them, the birds flew away; after I left, they all flew back. I had no

intention to catch them or hurt them. I was more than happy for them to come and eat my rice. I thought it would be the happiest thing for me to sit in the midst of the birds while they surrounded me on all sides. But they did not know my heart, and they always avoided me. If I wanted the birds to know my heart, the only way was for me to speak their language or become a bird flying among them and telling them my intention. Then I would not be misunderstood. But there was no way that I could become a bird; consequently, there was no way for me to show my heart to them. This is the same way God feels about us. God loves us; He likes us. He wants us to be close to Him. But we do not understand His heart. God's Word tells us that God has spoken of old in many portions and in many ways through His servants concerning His heart's desire and that He loves us. But man did not understand. Therefore, God had to personally come to this world and become a man. This man is Jesus, the Christ, whom we know. If I became a bird, you might say that I humiliated myself. But for God to become a man is more of a humiliation. What humility that the God of glory would lower Himself to become a man! He is far above all, but He emptied Himself, took the form of man, and came in the likeness of men. When Jesus was on the earth, everything He did expressed God's love toward men. If you read the life of Jesus, you will find out that He is not only a good man but God from heaven becoming a man. We thought that God hated us. But He became a man in order to show us that God is the same as Jesus. He was on the earth for thirty-three and a half years; during this time He expressed God's heart. God is the same as Jesus. The way Jesus treated men is the way God treats men.

Once, a man full of leprosy came to worship Jesus and said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can cleanse me" (Luke 5:12). Jesus very easily could have made him clean by one of His words. Instead, He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed!" (v. 13). A man full of leprosy is unclean and smelly! But the Lord put forth His hand and touched him. He sympathized with this man. He seemed to be saying, "If others are not willing to come to Me, and you are willing, I will touch you."

Another time, a woman caught in adultery was brought to the Lord (John 8:3-11). According to the law, such a woman should be stoned to death. The Lord Jesus could not say that she did not commit sin, yet He did not want to see her stoned to death. Therefore, He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). They were all convicted in their own consciences and left one by one, from the oldest to the youngest.

Then Jesus was left alone, and the woman stood before Him. What did the Lord say? He said, "Has no one condemned you?" (v. 10). She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus then said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (v. 11).

O friends! If you have not believed, let me tell you that God does not hate you; rather He loves you.

On another occasion, a publican named Matthew invited many publicans and sinners to his house, and he also invited Jesus. At that time the publicans were a very despised kind of people. The Jews had lost their country and were under the domination of Rome. For a Jew to work for those who conquered his country and dealt harshly with his own people, was something very despicable. If it were us, we would not have eaten or drunk with them. But Jesus ate and drank with them. Would you as a college student be willing to sit with such people? You might think that if a newspaper reporter found out that you were socializing with such people, it would be a big disgrace to you. But in any case, Jesus went. At that time there was another kind of people called the Pharisees. When they saw this, they spoke to Jesus' disciples, saying, "Why does your Teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners?" They were debating and criticizing. But how did Jesus reply? He said, "Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill...For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:10-13). Jesus opened up God's heart to men. Some may wonder, "Does God still want me? I am such a terrible sinner." Others may wonder if God would want persons like themselves because they have robbed others, committed adultery, told lies, and been unclean and filthy sinners. But Jesus has opened up God's heart and shown us that God wants us and loves us. He is, in effect, saying, "I am like a doctor, and I am not afraid of patients." Are patients afraid of doctors? Of course they are not afraid. Some may make up their minds to be better persons from now on, never losing their temper, playing cards, or going to the movies. But they can only do this for two or three days; then they misbehave again. Some may think that God does not like them and wants them to perish. But I must tell you that God wants you because He loves you! Friends, please do one thing today: remove the veils from your eyes so that you can see that God has no evil intentions toward you. He loves you.

During the European War [World War I], a preacher led a young lady to repent. Later she went to Paris and became a nurse for the Red Cross.

However, she became backslidden. Then one day she went to church, and the same preacher was preaching. She was determined to say something to hurt his feelings. After the sermon was over, he came up to shake hands with her. Then she said, "I am going to tell you one thing you may not like to hear. I do not need Jesus anymore, and I can still be happy." The preacher replied, "Maybe you can be happy in the world without Jesus, but the Lord Jesus in heaven cannot be happy without you." This is true. Everyone who knows God's Word can testify that God can only be happy when He has us. God is not only merciful to us, He not only cares for us and is concerned about us, He loves us. God's love for us is more than the love of a mother for her son. God's love for us is more than the love of a couple for each other; His love is more than the love between husband and wife. We may never have thought about God's feeling towards men. But I am here to say that God loves us.

Since God is love, the Lord Jesus did two things as He passed through His years on earth. God knows that the only reason that men on the earth cannot love Him or worship Him is that men have sinned. Sinners are doomed to perdition and hell. Therefore, He came to die on the cross for us. He bore our sins so that we should not perish but have eternal life. You may have frequently heard us say that sinners are doomed to go to hell and that the Lord Jesus came and died on the cross for men and bore men's sins. Do you know why we are preaching this message to you? Let me tell you: it would be enough for a person to go to hell if he only had one sin or sinned for one second. Do you think that you can be without sin for a month or a year? Do you think that you have never done anything bad or said any bad word? You may have had an improper thought for just a second or a minute; such thoughts may be unknown even to your parents or your wife. As long as you had such a thought, you are qualified to go to hell. God hates sin. No matter how much we hate sin, our feeling cannot be compared to the feeling that God has toward even a small sin. Even if we could feel the sins of the whole earth, it would not compare to the feeling that God has toward the evil of one lie. God knew that all men had sinned, and He had only one way, which was to come to this world, become a man (Jesus Christ), and bear men's sins on the cross. This was the first big thing He did. This shows God's heart. At the same time, God knows that you have sinned and that you still may sin even though the Lord Jesus died for you. Therefore, God gives you the Holy Spirit (His own Spirit) to live in you and strengthen you to not sin. This is the second thing that God did. This also shows His heart. God gives us two great graces:

one is to send the Lord Jesus to die for us so that our sins are forgiven; the other is to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us so that we can have the strength not to sin.

Friends, do you know how difficult it is to overcome sin? For example, in the matter of honesty, I do not know how many among us are truly honest men. I have been to many places, but I have not met many honest men. Not speaking enough is a lie; speaking too politely is also a lie. If you have tried to be an honest man, you will know that it is not easy. A friend of mine ran into some bandits in Canton one day, and they asked for his money. He thought that since he was a Christian, he could not lie. But if he told the truth, his money would be taken away. In the end he reluctantly told the truth and showed the bandits the few dollars in his pocket. In this case, lying could have saved him from some losses. But in order to be honest, one cannot tell a single lie. Many times one has a bad thought in his mind which will not go away. He may hate others and not forgive others. He may be fond of criticizing and spreading rumors about others. We tell lies all the time and like to be clever. But God knows all our sins. God will not only forgive all of our sins but will also have His Spirit live inside of us. The Spirit can empower us to overcome sins and become clean. This is God's heart! What God wants to do, He has already done. I can boldly say one word concerning salvation: there is no problem on God's side. The problem is on your side. Are you willing to believe? I can boldly say that God wants you. I have many friends who are in their fifties and sixties; they can also boldly testify to you that God loves you. Let me read you some more words that Jesus said while He was on the earth:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I desired to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matt. 23:37). God is willing, but man is not willing. Jerusalem is a city, and the Lord Jesus was crying over her. The Lord was more than willing to protect her and love her, but the children of Jerusalem would not. Is there anyone here who knows that he is a sinner? The Lord says that He loves you and wants you to be saved. Do you want to be saved today? There is no problem with God. How about you? If you have heard the gospel today, can you blame God for your going to hell? God is willing. You are the one that is not willing. God is willing, will you be willing? I am saying one thing today: God wants you, and God loves you. He says, "How often I desired...and you would not."

First Timothy 2:4 says, "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth." God desires that all men be saved; this is God's heart!

John 5:40 says, "Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." It is not that God will not give life to you; it is that you are not willing to have life! Therefore, while you are sitting here, if you have just a little desire to be saved, a tiny will to have eternal life, a tiny sensation to be released from sin, or a small wish to go to heaven, you will have it because God wants and wishes you would be this way. If you ask, you will have life. What does God want? God wants all men to have life. Do not be afraid. There is no problem on God's side; the problem lies on your side.

Once there was a man who met a gospel preacher in London. He said to the preacher, "Are you the one who preached in Paris before? Do you know that I have believed in Jesus?" The preacher said, "It is very good that you have believed." The man then said, "I believed in Jesus because of one word that you said." The preacher asked, "Which word was that?" He said, "You said that heaven's door is latched on the outside." Oh, the door latch of heaven were on the outside! You can only blame yourself if you do not enter. If the door latch of heaven were on the inside, you would not have any way to enter even if you wanted to enter. Then if God was happy, He would open it; but if He was not happy, He would close it, and you would have to knock on the door from the outside. But the door of heaven is latched on the outside! God has no problem; it all depends on your willingness to enter in.

Finally, let me tell you a story. There was a professor at Oxford University in England who was a Christian. He had many sons, and they all studied at Oxford. Every evening his house had a family worship meeting. His fourth son, the worst one, always found some excuse to skip the family worship. He would either leave right before the meeting started or would come home right after the meeting ended. One day he came home, and the meeting was not yet finished. The whole family was praying. He thought, "Let me go and see what they are praying." He became angry after he heard his mother's prayer; she said, "O God, my fourth son is a prodigal somewhere outside. He likes to play around and spend money, and he has no fear of You." The son became angry and said in his heart, "My mother did not pray for my oldest brother or my other brothers; she only prayed for me! I cannot stay in this house any longer!" He immediately ran upstairs and packed all the things in his room.

He took some of his father's money and left a note to his parents, saying, "Since you do not consider me good enough to be your son, I do not want to be your son. I am leaving. Goodbye." Then he left the house. First, he stayed in a big hotel. When his money was about to run out, he moved into a friend's house. The friend said, "You can stay in my house, but not for long. Even though we are classmates, your father is my teacher. It would not be good if he found out about this." Eventually, he had no alternative but to move out of his friend's house into a small hotel. His money began to run out, and he soon did not have enough for food, clothing, or shelter. Then he decided to go home. Since it was too embarrassing to go home during the day, he waited until a little past midnight before he went home. He tried to climb through the window when he arrived, but all the windows were closed. Reluctantly, he tried the front door. To his surprise the door opened when he pushed; it was not even latched. He ran upstairs directly to his own room. When he pushed open the door, he was surprised to see his father sitting there, facing the door. He was still quite stubborn and immediately thought of something, saying, "Why is someone so careless? The front door is not even locked." His father took off his glasses and held the son's hand and said, "My son! Ever since the day you left home—for over a year—the front door has never been closed." Brothers and sisters, this is a father's heart! The door was not left open for a month or half a year; it was left open all the time. This is a father's love! Many times we think that we are sinners and that God may not want us. But friends, let me tell you that He has never closed the door. There is no problem on God's side. All the problems are on your side. If there is a sinner who will come to God and say, "I am a sinner; I have misunderstood You, but You are still willing to accept me," he will be saved.

The Lord Jesus once spoke a parable about the prodigal son. When he was a great way off, his father saw him, had compassion on him, ran, fell on his neck, and kissed him. This expresses God's heart. God is calling you home today. Jesus has died for you, and the Holy Spirit has come. No one sitting here needs to go to hell. You do not need to go to hell. But if you do not accept the Lord, there is no other way. I hope you can remember that God is love! If you will say to God, "I am a sinner. I am willing, and I want to accept You," you will be saved. Then God will rejoice, and you will also rejoice together with Him. God is love!