

# FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

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## Introduction:

- A. It is very possibly the best known verse of the entire Bible.
- B. Many who have little or no acquaintance with the Scriptures at all have at least heard of John 3:16, or have seen it splashed on billboards, T-shirts, etc.
- C. All of the verses of the Bible are special because they were all inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16).
- D. But let's face it—though all verses in the Bible originated with God, there are some passages that find a special place in our hearts because their content is so heart-warming and moving.
- E. John 3:16 is such a passage. That is why it is often referred to as the golden text of the Bible.
- F. Our investigation will focus upon two major questions.

## I. WHY IS JOHN 3:16 SO ADORED?

- A. It reveals the greatest giver—God.
  - 1. The God of heaven was under no obligation to give man anything, much less eternal life.
  - 2. But God freely gave us so many things.
    - a. Physical Blessings (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; 17:24-28).
    - b. Spiritual Blessings (Eph. 1:3).
- B. It reveals the greatest love—so loved.
  - 1. Years ago, Whitney Houston sang a song entitled “The Greatest Love of All.” The song suggested that the greatest love of all is learning to love yourself.
  - 2. However, this is not accurate. The greatest love of all is seen in John 15:13 and 1 John 4:9-10.
- C. It reveals the greatest number—the world.
  - 1. The passage does not limit God's love to the rich and educated. Nor does the text confine God's love to a certain race.
  - 2. God's love is directed to every creature (Mark 16:15) of all nations (Matt. 28:19).
  - 3. Both the moral (Acts 10) and immoral (1 Cor. 6:9-11) need the love of God (Rom. 5:5-10).
- D. It reveals the greatest grace—that He gave.
  - 1. God was under no obligation to give man anything, much less the opportunity to live eternally.

2. Men have shown unmerited favor to other men, but never at the level of God's grace.
- E. It reveals the greatest gift—His only begotten Son.
1. Years ago, Ted Turner gave a gift of multiplied millions of dollars to a certain organization.
  2. Man's greatest need is not money, education, technology or pleasure. Man's greatest need is forgiveness of sins (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).
  3. Thus, the gift that God gave was/is even more priceless than any gift ever given (Rom. 5:6; 8:1; 2 Cor. 9:15).
- F. It reveals the greatest invitation—that whosoever.
1. A businessman made several thousand small mirrors with a message on the back of the mirror which read: "If you want to see who it is that God loves and for whom He gave His only begotten Son, look on the other side."
  2. A man named Richard Baxter wrote the following: "I thank God for that word 'whosoever.' If God had said there was mercy for Richard Baxter, I—in all my sin—would have thought that he meant some other Richard Baxter. But when he says, 'whosoever,' I know that includes me, the worst of all Richard Baxters."
  3. As the song says, "Whosoever surely meaneth me."
- G. It reveals the greatest condition—believeth.
1. The greatest Giver is offering the greatest gift to anyone who will meet the condition (requirement) of trusting in Christ in obedient faith.
  2. The gift of eternal life is free but is accessed only by an obedient faith (John 3:14-15, 36; Num. 21:5-9; Rom. 5:1-2).
- H. It reveals the greatest location—in Him.
1. The greatest location in the world is the safest place in the world and it is found in the greatest person in the world—Jesus, the Christ.
  2. It is not in Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Mohammed, or Confucius that salvation can be found (John 6:68).
  3. There is none other in whom salvation may be found (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:1, 10; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 5:11).
- I. It reveals the greatest deliverance—should not perish.
1. Many have been rescued from harrowing and perilous circumstances.
  2. There are many great deliverances in the Bible (Dan. 3, 6).
  3. However, there is no deliverance that can compare with being delivered from an eternal residence in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8)!
- J. It reveals the greatest difference—but.
1. This one three letter word is the difference between eternal pleasure and eternal pain.
  2. The same difference is emphasized in Matthew 25:46.

- K. It reveals the greatest promise—have everlasting life.
  - 1. That which the whole world is looking for is what the Christian has in promise: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).
  - 2. We do not have to be afraid of death (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8).
  - 3. This eternal life is found in His Son (1 John 5:11).

## II. HOW HAS JOHN 3:16 BEEN ABUSED?

- A. As marvelous as this text is, it has suffered at the hands of many false teachers and preachers.
  - 1. It has been abused by those who claim that it teaches salvation by faith alone.
    - a. They argue that since baptism is not mentioned explicitly in John 3:16 that it is not necessary for salvation.
      - (1) Jesus had already emphasized water baptism a few verses earlier (John 3:5) so it wasn't necessary to bring it up again.
      - (2) Interestingly, although repentance is not explicitly mentioned in John 3:16, when push comes to shove, faith only advocates will admit that repentance is necessary, but that it is included in the “believeth” of John 3:16.
    - b. We agree that repentance is included in the believeth of John 3:16 and hasten to say that the same logic that allows repentance to be included also allows baptism to be included as well, especially since Jesus has already emphasized it in the context.
  - 2. It has been abused by those who overemphasize the love of God as if it were His only attribute.
    - a. Again, the love only advocates ignore the context of the passage.
    - b. John 3:36 affirms that the wrath of God will abide upon the one that believeth not the Son!
- B. Some say that we ought to never preach anything that might offend someone's sensibilities. Someone has pointed out what such a philosophy, if followed, would do to John 3:16.
  - 1. The word “God” must be removed because the atheist is offended by its presence.
  - 2. The word “loved” must be removed to avoid offending the deist.
  - 3. The word “world” must be eliminated to avoid offending the Calvinist who believes in a limited atonement, i.e. that Christ only died for the elect.
  - 4. The words “he gave his only begotten Son” must be removed because those who reject the deity of Christ will be offended by their inclusion.
  - 5. The word “whosoever” must be taken out of the text because the Calvinist will be offended for the same reason mentioned in point # 3.

- 6. We must remove the words "believeth in him" on two counts: (1) The Universalist believes that all men will be saved without meeting any conditions and (2) the words "in him" would limit salvation to Jesus Christ, a concept that is too narrow minded for this broad-minded age.
- 7. The words "should not perish" are offensive to the Universalists who do not believe that anyone will perish. The concept is also offensive to the religious groups who reject the concept of hell.
- 8. Finally, we can't preach the words "have everlasting life" because the atheists, Darwinists and humanists reject the concept of an afterlife. How can we risk offending them by preaching such a doctrine?

C. Now that we have removed all of the offensive portions from John 3:16, let's see what we have left:

For \_\_\_\_\_ so \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_  
 that \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.

D. Now, isn't that better? If you ever need hope or encouragement, just read the politically correct version of John 3:16 above and see if you don't feel much better!

E. On second thought, let's just respect God and leave it like He originally revealed it!

**Conclusion:**

- A. John 3:16 is such a beautiful passage with such a beautiful message of hope.
- B. May we always adore the message of John 3:16, to the point of complete trusting obedience.
- C. May we never abuse this text by adding to it or taking from it!