



For God
so loved
the world
that He gave

His only begotten Son,
that whoever believes in
Him should not perish but have
everlasting life. (John 3:16 NKJV)

John 3:16 is often called “The Gospel Text,” for here we have the whole gospel briefly stated. We see the *source* of salvation—the love of God; the *channel* through which salvation comes—His only begotten Son; and the *way* by which we receive it—faith in His Son.

Perhaps you will say, “Oh, I have read that verse a thousand times.” Even if you have, have you ever really *believed* it—that is, by faith made yourself one of the “whoever’s” by trusting in Christ, and thereby received everlasting life?

A Christian friend told me how he was converted through this verse. He took it, read it word by word, believing as he read, applied it to himself, trusted the Son, and received everlasting life. Multitudes of other searching souls have done the same. Have you? If not, may the Lord help you to do so now.

Just let us look at this wonderful verse, a word or two at a time, always remembering that this is God’s Word, and God means what He says.

GOD

That is the first word. Salvation begins with God. Here is man’s first mistake. Man begins with himself. Man asks, “What must I do?” God says, “See what I have done.” Friend, turn from yourself to God. Hear what He says, and see what He has done.

LOVED THE WORLD

Love—salvation springs from the love of God. God loved what? The world, a world of sinners. Wondrous, undeserved love! But remember, we must accept that love, or else it will do us no good.

But I have omitted a word, have I not? It is such a little word, but very big with meaning.

SO

Oh that “So”! It tells of the great, boundless nature of God’s love, love which can only be measured by the action that it produced.

HE GAVE

Salvation is a gift. “The gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). Friend, are you trying to buy it? It is “without price” (Isaiah 55:1). God cannot sell it, and you cannot buy it—it is far too valuable. But God offers it freely as a gift. Will you accept it?

HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

What a tremendous sacrifice! What love that offered it! Salvation is through God’s Son. “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11,12). Eternal life is not in us, but in Jesus alone. Therefore take Him as your Savior, and you will have eternal life!

We have now seen what God has done—“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” Now, in the rest of the verse, we will see why He did it—“That whoever believes [trusts] in Him should [will] not perish but have everlasting life.”

WHOEVER

Perhaps you say, “How may I know that salvation is offered to me?” Well, what does God say? “Whoever,” which extends the offer of salvation to every man, woman, and child on the earth. That includes you, my friend, does it not?

BELIEVES or TRUSTS

Here it is as important to see what God *does not* say as what He *does* say.

God does *not* say, “Whoever is moral, respectable, honest, well spoken of, and an office-holder or member of the church will be saved.” This is man’s first false way of salvation—*character*. It was the Pharisee’s way—“God, I thank You that I am not like other men.” And so he “trusted in himself.” (See Luke 18:9,11.) Was he “justified,” cleansed of his sins? No (verse 14). Why not? Because he was only righteous in his own sight, and in the sight of those around him. In God’s sight he was a sinner, for “all have sinned.” When it comes to man’s character, there “is no difference” (Romans 3:22,23). In God’s sight, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10), and God is the Judge.

God also does *not* say, “Whoever does good works will be saved.” This is man’s second false way of salvation—*works*. Did it ever strike you—what good works can a sinner do? As is the tree, so is its fruit; as is the man, so are his works. If you are a sinner, your works are sinful and of no merit for salvation. “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Thus, you see, a sinner can’t do any works that please God. Even more than that, my unsaved friend, in God’s sight you are a sinner and therefore “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Now, what can dead people do? Nothing! It is *life* you need, and it is *life* God offers you.

Does God ask you as a sinner to work for salvation? No, His Word declares that salvation is “not of works” (Eph. 2:9). Galatians 2:16 tells us three times that salvation is not by works, and three times that it is by faith. Read that verse—it leaves no doubt!

Finally, God does *not* say “Whoever has a certain feeling is saved.” This is man’s third false way of salvation—*feelings*. This is a common mistake with anxious souls. “Oh,” says one, “if only I could feel some new feeling within me, I think I would be all right.” You think so, but does God say so? Never. He does not ask you to feel, but to believe His Word and trust His Son. I know what you want. You want to feel “the joy of salvation.” But how can you *feel* the joy of salvation, until you first *have* salvation? A drowning man can’t *feel* the joy of being saved until first he *is* saved, and neither can you. Likewise, just as feeling can’t save him, neither can it save you. Salvation is a fact, not a feeling, and rests on these three great facts—Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He has risen again (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

We’ve noticed that God *does not say*, Whoever is, or does, or feels. He *does say*, “Whoever believes.” To believe means to trust yourself completely to the one in whom you believe. Who is that?

IN HIM

The Son of God. Not in yourself, or in yourself and Jesus together, but in Jesus—Jesus only. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

SHOULD or WILL NOT PERISH

Perish you will, if you do not trust in Christ. The soul without Christ is in great danger. Did you ever think of that? Friend, if you are still an unbelieving sinner, you are in a terrible state, and on the way to a terrible doom! “He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). Escape to Christ, trust in Him, and then you will not perish.

BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE

No matter what kind of person you are, and no matter what kinds of things you have done, if you will *right now* trust in Jesus, believing who He is—the Son of God—and what He has done—died on the cross and risen again for you, you will *right now* have eternal life. When you believe God’s Word, you will have the assurance of your salvation, too, for it says of those who trust in Jesus, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

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