

# **“God’s Love For Man”**

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## Introduction

**“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”** (John 3:16). This is one of the all-time beloved and well-known verses in the entire Bible. It is frequently called the “golden text” of Scripture, or the “gospel in miniature.”

As recorded in John 3, in His conversation with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, our Lord makes several memorable statements. Among them: **“...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (v. 3); **“...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”** (v. 5); **“...Ye must be born again”** (v. 7); **“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”** (vs. 14-15). As profound and memorable as these statements are, it’s the sixteenth verse that surpasses all others both in familiarity and in frequency of quotation. Let us examine this verse more closely to understand its true message in its context.

## The Motivation For God’s Love - “For God So Loved The World”

Who are the recipients of the love of God in this momentous passage? Who is included in this designation “the world?” It cannot be the physical or material world to which Jesus is referring. The “world” that is loved by God must be the same as the “whosoever” who can benefit from God’s gift. The “world” is the creation of God who inhabits this earth - mankind.

Man is special because of his creation (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7). The account of man’s creation in Genesis 1-2 tells us that man was created “in the image of God.” The way God designed man, as an intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual being, sets him apart from everything else God created. The reason for man’s dwelling on earth, not simply to show forth God’s glory, as the rest of creation does (Psalm 19:1-4), but to become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4), sets him apart from the rest of creation. Indeed, man is special to God.

When we consider the recipients of God’s love, “the world,” it compels us to realize that God loves *all* mankind. Every man has a soul and God is the giver of that soul (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The words to a well-known song are appropriate to note at this point: “Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so!” Now let us consider how greatly God loves every one of us.

## The Magnitude Of God's Love - "For God So Loved"

That *little* word "so" carries such a *large* meaning. It is an adverb of manner, describing for us the extent, the degree, the limits, and the measurements of God's love for mankind. It is not enough to say that God loves us. John 3:16 is giving us an indication of *how much* God loves us.

It has been said that "the essential principle of art is beauty; of sin is selfishness; of righteousness is redemption; and of love is sacrifice." The unparalleled scope of God's love for man is seen in the nature of His sacrifice. God's love for mankind was so great that He sacrificed His Son on the cross of Calvary, which leads us to our next point of study.

### The Manifestation Of God's Love – "He Gave His Only Begotten Son"

Often we are caught up in the expression of love by words. While love does need verbal expression, the stronger indication of true love is expression of action. Consider the relationship of a husband and wife. There is a need for the sweet words of love to pass between them, but, there is an even greater need for them to *show* their love for one another in the *actions* of their relationship. Read passages such as First Corinthians chapter seven and Ephesians chapter five and deliberate the need for active expressions of love within a marriage.

In considering God's love for man, we can open our Bibles and read many Scriptures which state God's love. But how many more portray God's love for us in action with or without the explicit statement of love. Let's notice a few passages which demonstrate this love: **"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (Romans 5:8); **"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all..."** (Romans 8:32); **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"** (2 Corinthians 5:21); **"...that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"** (Hebrews 2:9); **"So Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many..."** (Hebrews 9:28); **"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...by whose stripes ye were healed"** (1 Peter 2:24); **"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"** (1 John 2:2). These are only a few of the verses in the New Testament which illustrate God's boundless love for mankind (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Truly, God manifested His love for man in the greatest sacrifice of all, the death of His only begotten Son for our sins (Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:28).

## The Message Of God's Love - "Everlasting Life"

Many believe that this verse is a statement of universal salvation to anyone that acknowledges any degree of belief in Jesus. But a study of the context of John chapter three eliminates this point of view. Remember the discussion Jesus is having with Nicodemus. Jesus stated that a man must be "born again" (vs. 3, 7), "born of water and of the Spirit" (v. 5), that it was a spiritual birth (vs. 6-13), and recounted the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness (vs. 14-15). By the end of John 3, we read, **"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth (obeyeth - ASV) not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him"** (v. 36). It is readily seen that the faith that brings everlasting life is an *obedient* faith. Not only is Jesus explaining this to Nicodemus, but the illustration Jesus uses, of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, reinforces this principle (Numbers 21). In reading this passage we notice that Israel's sins brought judgment from God. In order to be freed from God's judgment, they had to believe *and look* upon the brass serpent which Moses lifted up before them. Belief in salvation alone was not enough. They had to comply with God's commandments.

All sinners today are given the opportunity to receive "everlasting life." The Bible is very plain in how we become recipients of God's love. **"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"** (Titus 2:11-14). When we consider that God, out of His love for man, has offered his grace through instruction, why would we not hear His words? Jesus asked this of the Jews of His day, **"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"** (Luke 6:46)? If we want the blessings of God, the benefits of the death of Jesus, then we must be obedient to the words of God, the instruction found in the Bible (Matthew 7:21-27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:8-9).

### Conclusion

We have studied the Motivation for God's love, the Magnitude of God's love, the Manifestation of God's love, and the Message of God's love. How wonderful it is to have the Word of God, the Bible, which teaches us of God, of His love for man, and how we can benefit from His love. We, like Peter, must realize the folly of turning to any other source for salvation: **"...Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"** (John 6:68).