

*“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*

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### *God So Loved*

There is so much packed in these three little words. The first word is God, because the entire theme is about God. Whether you believe in God or not does not change the fact that He exists, nor does it change His love for you. Despite how you may at times feel, God loves you. Even in your sins, God still loves you, because “God is love” (1 John 4:8). This is what is being expressed here. Here at the beginning of this verse, we have two main themes – God and loved. But notice how these two words are beautifully tied together. The Bible could have simply said, “God loved.” That would have been sufficient to express the idea, but the Bible had to go beyond this, tying the subject and verb with a conjunction. God didn’t merely love. He so desperately loved. A pastor once gave the funeral for a woman whose son died at a very young age. As they carried the casket, the woman clung to the box, crying, “We loved you so!” The pastor said he never looked at this verse the same after that. God doesn’t just love us. He loves us so dearly, so desperately, so emphatically, so enthusiastically, so vigorously, so passionately. God so loves us.

### *The World*

While some may quickly gloss over these two little words, they express an amazing beauty about the character of God. According to the Bible, the world is the enemy of God. Not because God hates the world. On the contrary! The world hates God. The world has chosen sin and Satan over God. Satan is “the

ruler of this world” (John 16:11). Still, in spite of the world’s love for sin and its hatred of God, He still loves us. He does not love our sin, nor can He save us while we choose to live in sin, but He is calling us to turn from sin because He loves us. Like the parent of a child with a drug addiction, the parent’s love for the child leads them to hate the drug that is killing their child. As the parent loves the child, even in their sin, God loved us “while we were still sinners” (Rom. 5:8). While we rebel against God, He still loves us. While some try to paint God as a tyrant who looks forward to destroying sinners, the Bible gives an entirely different picture of a “merciful” God who has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ex. 34:6; Ezek. 33:11). God loves us dearly right now, today. Even as we rebel in sin, His loving arms long to embrace us.

### *That He Gave*

A love that merely speaks flattering words without action is nothing. Sadly, many gullible women are drawn in by men who speak silky words with smooth tongues, only to find out later that their love was only lip service. God’s love is not like that. God may not always say things that we like to hear. God will certainly not always flatter us with silky words, but real love is more than words. It is about action. This works both ways. Many claim to love God, but they refuse to obey Him. Such love is empty. John says, “this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments,” so “let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 5:3; 3:18). God’s love involves action. God loves us so much that He “demonstrates His own love toward us” (Rom. 5:8). And how is this love demonstrated? By giving. True love demonstrates itself with a willingness to give of itself—a willingness to make sacrifices. Anyone who has been in a relationship knows that one of the keys to a lasting relationship is

sacrifice. If you love your spouse, you will at times make sacrifices. God demonstrated His love for you by making the greatest sacrifice.

### *His Only Son*

As the father of one child, this verse really speaks to me. Still, it does not take a father, or even a parent, to comprehend this verse. All of us have loved ones. All of us have people in our lives that we cherish. All of us have someone close to us who we just cannot imagine living without. Many of us have also lost loved ones who were very dear to us, but God demonstrated His love by willfully giving up His Son. This is so beautifully illustrated in the film, *Most—the Bridge*, in which a father must choose to either let his son get run over by a train and or let the train crash, thus killing all the members on board. In short, the father makes the choice to let his only son die, but God did something more. He sent His Son into this world where He would risk His own eternity, be hated, be violently tortured, only to suffer and die in agony. As the father of one son, I cannot wrap my mind around such a sacrifice, but I’m glad He did it. God gave His Son so our sons and daughters could live. God gave His Son so that our loved ones could live. God gave His Son so that you and I could live. What father would make such a sacrifice to give their enemy a second chance?

### *That Whoever Believes*

What a promise! In that word, whoever, God encompasses the entire world. God has not confined salvation to only a few or to a certain group of people. Anyone who desires to have eternal life may have it on one condition. They must believe. This is not talking about a mere mental acknowledgment that God is real, but a belief that moves us. Imagine that a man comes on the news and informs everyone that a

missile is going to destroy the city in five hours. Another station then says the missile will not hit the city. Now, everyone in the city has the choice of who they will believe. Life or death depends on who each person chooses to believe. Everyone has a choice. They have five hours to leave the city. Whoever chooses can escape, but those who don't believe that the missile will hit the city will not react. They will keep doing the same things. Only those who believe the danger is coming will act. Similarly, salvation comes through believing enough to act. Those who believe will repent, turn from their sins, ask God for forgiveness, and wash away their sins in the waters of baptism. The offer is for anyone who chooses to believe.

*Should Not Perish*

Of course, Jesus is not here talking about physical death, but eternal death, in contrast with eternal life. The full promise is that they "should not perish but have everlasting life." This promise is what drives Christians. Think of it this way. Imagine that you are having a bad day when you find out that you won a million dollars. While you don't have the money yet, and your circumstances have not changed, your belief in the promise changes you. You can endure the hardships of the day better because of the promise. The Christian can better endure the trials of this life because of God's promises. The promise that we will not perish but have everlasting life is only one of the hopes that keep the Christian going. We also have the promise of seeing Jesus, seeing our loved ones again, having a pure character, and living in our heavenly home forever. And these promises are free to anyone who will choose to believe. God loves you dearly and is waiting for you to come to Him. Why don't you make that decision now?

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**God Loves You**



*An exposition of John 3:16*