

Pt 16 For God So Loved the World – John 3:16

A sermon series in the Gospel of John, by Pastor Byron Chesney at Porchlight Baptist Church www.pbcknox.com

John 3:16 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.

There are only 25 words in John 3:16 but these 25 words have brought more hope to the lost sinner than any other in the Bible. It is here we find:

- God's love introduced to the world
- Jesus offered as a light to those in darkness
- Hope brought to the hopeless
- Love brought to the loveless
- Life brought to the dying.
- Heaven offered to the hell bound.

It was the first verse I memorized as a child. I can still remember being 5-years old at North Acres Baptist, standing in front of the church with my Sunday school class and quoting John 3:16 and then singing: "*Jesus Loves Me this I Know, for the Bible tells Me So.*"

There was a time when John 3:16 could be seen all over Knoxville and the South. You would see it on the wall behind the cashiers at the grocery store. Handmade signs with this verse could be seen in front yards of homes, on street corners, and even on sides of barns. If I were allowed only a single verse of Scripture for the rest of my life, it would be this very one.

16 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.

I would like for us to break this verse down and look at each section of it.

For God so loved the world

Thayer's Greek Dictionary defines the "world" as "*The ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ.*" So the world includes murderers, fornicators, liars, cheaters, whoremongers and any other unimaginable wicked sinner, including you and me.

To think that the perfect, holy, righteous God of Heaven would love a world of rebellious hell-bound sinners so much that He willingly sacrificed his Own Son to save us, is unfathomable. An earthly king would destroy everyone and everything in it before he would do such a thing. But God is not an earthly king.

Please do not try and humanize God and think that His love is like our love. Our love is mostly fleshly and selfish in nature. Human love is fickle. We love someone as long as they love us back and do things we desire. But God's love is completely opposite of ours. His love is self-sacrificing. His love is without limits. The Bible says in **Romans 5:8** But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

that he gave his only begotten Son

Notice what God did, he "gave." I think we all know what the word "gave" means don't we? It means "*to bestow upon, to give over, to place into another's possession.*" At Christmas time we give gifts to those we love. We don't expect anything in return. We don't ask them to pay us for the gift. We give it to them free of charge. It's the same with God. He gave us a gift.

The Bible says in **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Also in **Ephesians 2:8** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:*

Listen to part of the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well, who he met in Samaria: **John 4:9-10** Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. **10** Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

All of these passages of Scripture show us salvation is not something you have to buy or work for – it is entirely a free gift from God.

What is this free gift God gave us? It says: **His only begotten Son** – that phrase "**only begotten**" means "*the only One of His kind.*" In other words, there is no other like unto Him. Being "begotten" doesn't mean he was "produced" or "created," because Christ has always been. He is eternal. It is not referring to a physical birth, it is referring to him being the Only One of His kind.

Sure, Jesus was made flesh and born as a man just as it says in **John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. This is what we refer to as the incarnation. It is God manifesting himself in human form.

That phrase "**only begotten son**" is also said of Isaac in **Hebrews 11:17** By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his **only begotten son**"

We also read in **Genesis 22:1-2** And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am.* **2** And he said, Take now thy son, **thine only son Isaac**, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Abraham actually had two sons when he offered up Isaac. His first son was Ishmael whom he had with Hagar. Isaac was his second son which he had with Sarah; however, Isaac is called "**his only begotten son,**" because he was the only one of his kind. He was the only son born according to God's promise and was the only heir of that promise – therefore he was Abraham's "**only begotten son.**"

We also read in **1 John 4:7-10** Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. **8** He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. **9** In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent **his only begotten Son** into the world, that we might live through him. **10** Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 5:21** 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.

So, while God does love us, and gave and sent us his Only Begotten Son, it is actually God's Grace that saves us. **Ephesians 2:8-9** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. It is God's sovereign Divine mercy and grace that saves us. God is actually the One who instills within us the faith we have in Christ to believe in Him.

Which brings us to the next part of the verse: **that whosoever believeth in him** There is a lot of controversy over who the word "**whosoever**" is referring to.

- Some say it means only the elect.
- Some say it means only the Jews.
- Some say it means Jew and Gentile alike.
- Some say it means all of mankind.

I like the way Thayer's Greek Dictionary defines the word "**whosoever**." "**each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything**"

The word "**whosoever**," is used **183** times in our King James Version of the Bible.

- **73** times in the Old Testament
- **110** in the New Testament

Some of the major "**whosoever**" verses that deal specifically with salvation are:

- **John 3:16**...Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life
- **John 11:26**...Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die
- **Acts 10:43**...Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins
- **Romans 10:13**...Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved
- **1 John 4:15**...Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God
- **Revelation 22:17**...And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely

In the Baptist church you hear the word "**free will**" a lot. People like the concept of a person having the "free will" to pick and choose what they want. The Free Will Baptist denomination was actually started in the 1700s in North Carolina and it was based on this thought, which is the basis of Arminianism.

Here in America we live in a constitutional republic. We have no idea what it is like to live under a monarchy the way they do in England. Most Americans have the notion that we have rights or freedoms – while we may have some to a degree, we are still governed by a Federal, State, and Local government. You are only as free as they allow you to be. Our "rights" are only those things the government says we have rights to. Truthfully, our free will is limited to a higher power.

So, what does all that have to do with our free will when it comes to God and "**whosoever**"?

The Bible says in **Philippians 2:13** For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

Some people say, "**I found God**." But the truth is, if you are saved, He found you which is what motivated you to find Him.

Jesus says in **John 6:37-40** All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Further down in **John 6:44** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Bible is very clear that the only way a person is saved is if God chooses them to be. That would make the "**whosoever**" mean "**whosoever God chooses**." Some may say, "Well, that's reformed preaching." Or, "that's Calvinistic teaching." To that I say, "Nope, that's Bible preaching and Bible teaching."

Let's look at a few passages of Scripture which explains this:

Ephesians 2:1-10

- 1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
- 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to

the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Spiritually speaking, a person without Christ is dead. Just as it says in verse 1: "**dead in trespasses and sins**." And in verse 5: "**Even when we were dead in sins**."

Dead things cannot do anything. If a squirrel gets run over in the middle of the road and it dies there, it cannot revive itself, come back to life, and go back into the woods. No, it will lay there and get driven on, start rotting, and get pecked and eaten on by buzzards. Before we were saved, we were like that dead squirrel.

We could not spiritually revive ourselves from the dead, it required something or someone to do it for us. The word "**quicken**" means "**to bring to life**." It requires God the Father to "**quicken**" us to bring us to life. When God quickens us, that is when His "drawing" begins.

2 Timothy 1:7-10 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. 8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, **not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began**, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Did you see that? "**not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace**." So, how does all of this line up with "**whosoever believeth**"? I think it's pretty clear if someone believes, it is because God put it in him to believe. Whosoever means exactly what we think it means; anyone. But if anyone believes in Jesus it's because God put it within them to believe.

What is it that a person must believe to be saved? According to the Bible: "**in him**." The him meaning Christ. It's not just a belief that Jesus was a real man or that he existed. It means you believe in him as Savior. You believe in His Gospel (the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ). Why else would you believe in him?

We've spent a lot of time going over the first part of the verse but quickly let's look at the last part: **should not perish, but have everlasting life** We will be looking more at the meaning of this in our next study but let me say this: The word "**should**" does not mean "**perhaps**." It's not a question of salvation, it is assurance of salvation.

Everlasting life means exactly what we think it means: **Eternal, forever, no ending**.