

Martin Luther referred to John 3:16 as—"The heart of the Bible, the gospel in miniature"—it's in many ways an intimidating verse—it's a verse that stands out from Scripture as Mount Everest stands above the rest of the Himalayan mountains...

Now—in coming to verses 16-17—it must be remembered that they have a very close connection to the preceding verses (that is, it's one grand mountain peak within a mountain range) —this is made evident in most English translations in that both verses begin with the connecting word—"for"—"For God so loved the world...For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world..."

In other words—verses 16 and 17 provide for us—two related reasons why the Son of Man was lifted up on the cross—because of God's LOVE (v16), and because of God's PURPOSE (v17)—to be more specific—v16 provides the reason why Christ was lifted up (v14), which is the love of God, and v17 provides an expansion of the latter part of v16—thus v17 is really an explanation of the phrase—"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life...For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world..."

Now—before we come to our text—I think it's important to keep in mind—because these verses are a part of a larger discourse to unbelieving Nicodemus—they were never intended to be a strictly theological statement but serve as an illustration of how Jesus preached the gospel to lost sinners—"Nicodemus, you must be born again, because by nature you are all flesh—fallen and corrupt human nature—you refuse to believe this, but it's true—furthermore—God has provided not only for the Jews, but for the whole world, a remedy for their sin—and this remedy was given for no other reason than His love—this is the grand source behind this great salvation..."

- I. The GIFT of God's Love
- II. The EXTENT of God's Love
- III. The PURPOSE of God's Love

#### I. The GIFT of God's Love—v16a

1. V16—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—giving Christ is the expression of love...
2. The Scriptures often describe love in this manner—love shows itself in giving for the good and benefit of others...
3. The mother loves her children in that she gives her self for their good—the husband loves his wife in that he sacrifices himself for her...
4. Love gives—it gives for the right reason and in the right way—but love gives—love is not selfish but selfless...
5. In short love desires the good of others—it gives of itself for the good of others—it puts others before itself...
6. Now—I'm sure we understand—that God gives many gifts to man—He gives the gift of life, health, family...
7. Matt.5:44—"love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you...that you may be sons of your faith in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust..."
8. In other words—God loves His enemies—in that He gives them certain gifts—He gives them His sun and rain...
9. These are gifts from God and the expression of His general love for mankind—because God loves He gives...
10. But—there is no gift given by God that exceeds the gift of His Son—He gave His only and eternally begotten Son...

11. Thus—here I want to briefly suggest three reasons why the gift of God's Son was the greatest display of love...
12. [1] Who He gave—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—His Son, the only begotten...
13. The Greek word rendered "only begotten" is one compound word *monogenes*—*mono* (one or only) and *genes* (born)...
14. Literally the word simply means—the only born one—the uniquely born Son—the eternally begotten Son of God...
15. Thus—this word describes His unique and eternal relationship to His Father—He always existed as His Son...
16. Now—to say that Christ is eternal born or generated out-from the Father means—He derives His existence from the Father...
17. This generation is an eternal generation—that is—the Father always existed as the Father and the Son as His Son...
18. This of course means that the Son and Father share the same essence—the Father and the Son are one in nature...
19. Now—the main point that our Savior is here making is this—there exists the closest relation between them...
20. V18—"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him..."
21. That the Father and Son share the same essence or nature does NOT mean they are one and the same Persons...
22. Though they each share the same divine essence—they also possess unique properties—true ONLY of them...
23. Thus—the Father begets the Son and the Son is begotten of the Father—they are eternally Father and Son...
24. This is evident from v16—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"—the Father gave His Son...
25. How can the Father give the Son unless they be distinct persons—unless in some sense they are not identical...
26. Now—I point this out—because it assists in understanding the love that the Father eternally had for His Son...
27. For example—think of little Titus Dubina—born a few months ago—and the love that Samson has for his son...
28. The love that a father has for his son (or daughter) is amazing—it's almost frightening to think how great it is...
29. Yet brethren—what is this but the deepest hatred in comparison—God's love for His only begotten Son is infinite...
30. I think we often over look this point—we often focus upon the sacrifice of the Son in becoming a man to die...
31. But we rarely think about the sacrifice the Father made in giving His Son—"For God so loved the world that He gave..."
32. [2] Why He gave Him—that Father gave His Son—for the purpose of becoming a sacrifice to atone for sin...
33. Now—though this fact isn't expressly mentioned in v16, it is implied—He was given that others would not perish...
34. Well—how would those who believe in Him NOT perish—but because—He would perish for them in their place...
35. 1Jn.4:10—"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins..."
36. "In this is love"—that is—herein is the greatest display of love possible—that God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins..."
37. That is—He sent His Son to bear our sins and satisfy His just wrath—He gave His Son to become our substitute...

38. Gen.22:2—"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering..."
39. So too—God gave His only beloved Son—to offer Him up as a sacrifice—to roast in the fires of His own wrath...
40. [3] Who He gave Him to—I will return to this in a minute—but for now let me say—the greatness of God's gift is evidenced in who He gave Him for...
41. Rom.5:8—"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us..."
42. In other words—there was nothing in man that drew God's love from His heart—His love is gracious and undeserving...
43. This again presupposes that God's love is initiating—it goes first—God doesn't love us because we love Him...
44. 1Jn.4:10—"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins..."
45. This is what makes God's love great—it's great because it's bestowed upon people who in no-way deserve it...
46. But—I can go further than this—God's love is bestowed upon rebels—upon unworthy, hell deserving sinners...
47. CHS—"What was there in the world that God should love it? There was nothing lovable in it. No fragrant flower grew in that arid desert. Enmity to him, hatred to his truth, disregard of his law, rebellion against his commandments; those were the thorns and briars which covered the waste land; but no desirable thing blossomed there..."
48. Thus—we are confronted with this glorious truth concerning the love of God—"For God so loved the world..."
49. [a] Let us tell others about it—brethren, I am totally convinced that sinners must FIRST hear about their sins...
50. They, like Nicodemus, must be told they are all flesh—they need a new heart—for their first one is depraved...
51. It's for this reason—the apostles went forth preaching that men should repent—but they also preached the gospel...
52. Thus—let just say—you're sharing the gospel with a friend—and you've told him about his sins and the Savior...
53. Let's say he then asks you a question—why would God give someone like me His own Son as a sacrifice from sin...
54. Then you should say—well friend it certainly isn't because you deserve it—the only answer I can give is His love...
55. [b] Let us tell ourselves about it, Jude 1:21—"keep yourselves in the love of God"—knowledgeable of His love for us...
56. I think sometimes it's easier to tell others about God's love—then it is to believe that God actually loves us...

## II. The EXTENT of God's Love—v16a

1. Here of course I'm thinking about the phrase—"For God so loved the world"—this is the extent of His love...
2. In other words—God gave His Son for the world—because His love extends to the world—"For God loved the world..."
3. Now—the Greek word rendered "world" is *cosmos*—it can mean a few things—let me suggest it here means two things...
4. [1] The GENTILE world—that is—the NT often uses the word "world" to refer to the NON-Jewish nations...
5. In other words—Christ was given not merely to save Jews but Gentiles—who are scattered through the nations...

6. Now—I trust this is rather obvious—Jesus is here speaking to Nicodemus—as representative of the Jewish nation...
7. The Jews thought that salvation was FROM them and FOR them—they were right on the first and wrong on the second...
8. Salvation was FROM Jews in that Christ was Jewish—but salvation was always intended to be FOR the world...
9. Now—it's really difficult for us to understand how humbling this truth would have been to the Jews like Nicodemus...
10. The Jews were a very proud people who thought God's purposes began with them and it largely ended with them...
11. Many of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, placed their confidence in their nationally—in that they were Jews...
12. Thus—in some sense—the fact that Jesus speaks about the "world" is a rebuke to Nicodemus and the Jews...
13. Now—Nicodemus had no excuse for his ignorance and national pride—the OT repeatedly foretold the salvation of the world or the Gentiles...
14. Ps.22:27—"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You..."
15. This part of the Psalm describes the advance of Christ's gospel—through the ministry of His apostles and church...
16. Notice the broad extent of this success—"ALL the ends of the world...and ALL the families of the nations..."
17. That is—there will be sinners saved from coast to coast—from the four corners of the world—from every nation...
18. Furthermore—notice how the terms "world" and "nations" are used interchangeably as they are the same thing...
19. In other words—in contrast to merely the Jews—under gospel days—sinners from every nation will be saved...
20. Mk.16:15—"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature—that is—the message of God's love..."
21. Oh—my friends—this is an amazing truth—the missionary sent to Africa is to tell the Africans about God's love...
22. The missionary sent to China is to tell the Chinese about God's love—and the missionaries sent to India—are to tell them of God's love...
23. Why are we to take the gospel to all these nations—but because God's love extends to all the nations in the world...
24. Rom.11:12—"Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fulness..."
25. [2] The HOSTILE world—that is—by "world" is meant—fallen and depraved man—hostile to God and His word...
26. V17—"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved..."
27. Now—here you have to think for a second—notice Christ was NOT sent to condemn but to save the world...
28. Now—if Christ was sent to save the world—then the world needed saving—and that means it is a fallen world...
29. In other words—God didn't send Christ to condemn the world—because the world was already condemned...
30. The world was already condemned because of its sin—even if the world never heard the gospel it's condemned...
31. V18—"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.."
32. That is—those who refuse to believe upon Christ is condemned—because only in Christ is there salvation from condemnation...

33. In other words—the world is already condemned—now those who hear and reject the gospel are doubly guilty...
34. But Christ came into the world—in order to save it—save it from what—save it from sin and from condemnation...
35. V19—"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil..."
36. Christ—came into THIS world—into this God-hating, depraved, and wicked world—a world of Christ-rejecters...
37. Thus—I suggest that by world—it's not so much our Savior's intent to stress the BIGNESS but BADNESS...
38. B.B. Warfield—"The point is not to suggest that the world is so *big* that it takes a great deal of love to embrace it all, but that the world is so *bad* that it takes a great kind of love to love it at all..."
39. Thus—the gospel is not merely to be taken to the nations—but to the hostile and evil people within those nations...
40. In other words—the gospel message is reserved for "good people" but natively hostile, sinful and wicked people...

### III. The PURPOSE of God's Love—vv16b-17

1. Now—the purpose why God gave His Son is found in v16b—"that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life..."
2. There's a negative and positive—the negative—"whoever believes should not perish"—the positive—"but have everlasting life..."
3. [1] The negative—"whoever believes in Him should not perish"—that is—that the believing ones should not perish...
4. Everyone who believes in Him—who places their faith and trust in Christ—"should not perish" or be destroyed...
5. Now—I trust it's obviously that the perishing or destruction of this verse—is as long as the life of this verse...
6. That is—just as the life offered is eternal so is the perishing—in other words—it's an eternal perishing or destruction...
7. 2Thess.1:9—"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power..."
8. Matt.10:28—"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell..."
9. Thus—by perishing is not meant "none-existence"—but it's conscious and eternal torment in body and soul...
10. "These shall be punished with everlasting destruction"—this perishing or destruction is a penalty or punishment...
11. Furthermore—by perishing it can NOT merely mean physical death—for every person perishes in this sense...
12. But this text speaks about some people who will NOT perish—thus the perishing must refer to spiritual and eternal perishing...
13. Now—notice who does NOT perish—"that whoever believes in Him"—that is—who places their trust in Him...
14. But—believes in Him FOR what or AS what—well obviously—those who believe in Him for salvation from perishing...
15. [2] The positive—"but have eternal life"—literally—"but have life eternal"—or a life that lasts for eternity...
16. Thus—the life that Jesus refers to begins now—Christians have a new life that begins now and continues for eternity...
17. This is the reason why the Father gave His Son—"that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have life eternal..."

18. V17—"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved..."
19. Thus v17 simply elaborates on the latter part of v16—it underscores the reason or purpose the Son was given...
20. The Father did not send His Son into this world to condemn it—He sent Him into the world as Savior not Judge...
21. Now—this does not deny the fact that Christ will return as a Judge—but in His coming He came as a Savior...
22. Lk.9:55-56—"You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.
23. Jn.10:10—"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly..."
24. Jn.12:46-48—"I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day (Jn.9:39-41)..."
25. Thus—we learn—that it was the purpose of the Father in giving His Son—to save sinners from perishing in their sin...
26. But—it is very important to notice that Christ expressly says—this purpose is to save those who believe in Christ...
27. V16—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish..."
28. V17—"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved..."
29. In other words—it was the purpose of God to send Christ as the Savior of the world—and that in two ways...
30. [a] God gave Christ as the OFFICIAL Savior of all men—that is—He was sent as fallen man's only remedy...
31. Let me illustrate—do you remember the illustration I gave last week about the deathly sick village in Haiti...
32. The entire village was sick with a deadly disease—but then a wealthy and gracious man sends them a doctor...
33. The doctor has a remedy sufficient to heal all who come to him—is the ONLY and OFFICIAL doctor of the village...
34. So too—God has given Christ as the ONLY and OFFICIAL Savior of the world—not to condemn it but save it...
35. This is the message that the Church is commissioned to preach—we are to tell the other villagers about the remedy...
36. Yet—let's say for the sake of our illustration—that the disease within these Haitians gave them a form of insanity...
37. So that—they simply refused to come—thus they were not only sick—but they were sick to the point of rebellion...
38. [b] God gave Christ as the ACTUAL Savior of the elect—that is—while Christ is the official Savior of all men He is the effectual Savior of some men...
39. In other words—God has a specific love for specific people—and this love will not let them perish in their sin...
40. Let's return again to our village illustration—let's say that the benevolent man who sent the doctor had family members in the village...
41. Family members that he loved greatly—and he gave the doctor specific instructions to subdue and heal them...
42. In other words—the love of God is NOT merely a love that makes salvation possible—but makes it ACTUAL...