

The Greatest Love Story

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.”

The Bible is the greatest book in the world; it is the heart of God. The Book of John is the heart of the Bible, and John 3:16 is the heart of the Book of John. John 3:16 is the best known and most quoted verse in the Bible. No doubt all of us are familiar with this verse. Our scripture is not only familiar, but it is both simple and profound. It is simple enough for a child to understand, yet so profound that scholars cannot reach its depth.

John 3:16 is a divine love story. All of us are familiar with love stories. There is the love story of “Romeo and Juliet.” There is the love story of “Gone with the Wind,” and the love story of “My Fair Lady” and many others. Perhaps you have or will have your own love story. So, no doubt all of us can identify with love stories. Our Scripture today is not about just any love story, but it is about a divine love story, the greatest love story. John 3:16 is the greatest love story!

The Greatest Lover *“For God”*

The Scripture begins with the phrase “For God”. When you think of God, what do you think about or what thoughts come to your mind? When I think about God, I think of Him as being the greatest Being. There is no Being greater than God. God is omniscient, He is all knowing. God is omnipresent, He is everywhere present. God is omnipotent, He is all powerful. God has no beginning and He has no end. He has no starting point and He has no ending point. He is the uncaused cause, the first cause, the Creator of everything. The Bible declares that, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1).” The Bible declares that, “The earth is the Lord’s, and fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein (Psalm 24:1).” When I think about God, I think of Him as being the greatest Being, the greatest Creator and the greatest Sustainer. When I think about God, I think of Him as being the greatest Healer. There is no pain, there is no situation, and there is neither sorrow nor sickness that my God cannot heal. When I think about God, I think of Him as being the greatest Miracle Worker. He works miracles, signs, and wonders to perform. There is no habit that God cannot break. There is no problem that God cannot solve. There is no rough road that God cannot smooth. There is no mountain that God cannot move. There is no miracle that God cannot perform. When I think of God, I think of Him as being many things, but in our scripture, the emphasis is on God being the greatest Lover. The greatest Being, the greatest Creator and Sustainer, the greatest Healer, the greatest Miracle Worker is the greatest Lover. John wrote, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:8).” Love is one of the many attributes of God. This is the greatest love story, and God is the greatest Lover!

The Greatest Degree and the Greatest Emotion *“so loved”*

The phrase “God so” denotes that God loves to the greatest degree. The word “so” is an adverb of manner denoting the manner in which God loves, the degree of His love. God is an infinite God, an

infinite Being. God is love and He can only love according to His nature. Consequently, He loves in an infinite degree. We can't measure God's love. No tape measure can measure it; no circumference can go around it. No mind can comprehend it. God's love is beyond human estimate and measurement. Paul wrote "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor dept, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Your husband or wife may love you. Your father or mother may love you. Your brother or sister may love you, but God loves you more. God's love for you is limitless. God loves you in an infinite degree!

Also, the word "loved" expresses the greatest emotion. Civil servants (Emergency Medical Technicians, Firemen, Policemen, etc.) have given their lives for the love of their profession. Men and women have given their lives for the love of their country. "Love is stronger than hate. Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceable with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:18-21)." Love is stronger than fear. John wrote, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth our fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18)." God demonstrated the greatest emotion by providing the greatest sacrifice, the greatest substitute that we believers may spent eternity with Him. Paul wrote, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6-8)." The Hebrews writer wrote "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9)." Love is the strongest and greatest emotion. This is the greatest love story, of the greatest Lover, loving in the greatest degree, demonstrating the greatest emotion!

The Greatest Population *"the world"*

The word 'world' denotes the greatest population. There is no population greater than the world. There are more than 6.5 billion people living in the world today and I want you to know that God loves every one of us. God's love includes the past, present, and the future. God's love includes all those who have died. It includes all those who are now living. "God so loved the world," a world of sinners. No matter what the depths of your sins may be; God loves you. You may be a fornicator, idolater, liar, rapist, child molester, murderer, or unbeliever, God still loves you. You may not even love yourself, but God loves you. No matter what you have done, no matter what the depths of your sins may be, or who you are, or where you may be, God loves you. God's love also includes all those who will live in the future. The world, the greatest population is the object of God's attention, affection, and love. God the greatest Being, the greatest Lover, loves you. This is the greatest love story, God loving the greatest population!

The Greatest Action ***“that he gave”***

The phrase “that he gave” denotes the greatest action. Love is not passive, love is not stagnant, but rather love acts, love does, love expresses itself in appropriate action. Love does not say one thing and respond in the opposite way. Love does not degrade others; love does not harm others, physically, emotionally, or spiritually. It is very easy to say, “I love you.” Those words are good to say and good to hear, but our lips must match our lives. Genuine or real love not only says, but genuine loves does. Paul wrote, “Charity (Love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity (love) envieth not; charity (love) vaunted not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth; Bearth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. Charity (Love) never faileth: (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).” Love is kind. When we see love in action, we observe genuine or real love. The Bible says, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6-8).” Jesus said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).” Also, He said, “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:17).” It is easy to profess love, but real love will express itself in appropriate actions. The greatest Lover expressed the greatest action, He gave heaven’s best. This is the greatest love story; God has expressed the greatest action!

The Greatest Gift ***“his only begotten Son”***

The word begotten means “unique” or “one and only one.” It is referring to one of a kind with a specific relationship, pertaining to being the only one of its kind or class, or unique in kind. Jesus is God’s unique Son, His one and only eternal Son. God has many sons. Adam is the son of God (Luke 3:38). Believers are the sons of God (John 1:12). Angels are the sons of God (Job 1:6); however, Jesus is God’s unique Son, his eternal Son, the second person of the Godhead.

The phrase “his only begotten Son” denotes the greatest Gift. All of us are familiar with gifts. We receive Christmas gifts, birthday gifts, graduation gifts, wedding gifts, anniversary gifts, and many other kinds of gifts. All of us can identify with gifts. God’s Gift to the world however; is not just any gift or a common gift, but it is the greatest Gift. God’s Gift to the world is greater than any car, greater than any home, greater than money, or any other material thing. Jesus is God unique Son. John wrote, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). “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 (1 John 4:9).” This is the greatest love story; God has given His best, the greatest Gift, His only begotten Son!

The Greatest Invitation *“that whosoever”*

The phrase “that whosoever” denotes the greatest invitation. All of us are familiar with great invitations. If you were invited to the Governor’s Mansion for dinner, that would be a great invitation. If you were invited to the White House by the president for a special occasion, that would be a great invitation. Those invitations are limited to a select few, but the greatest invitation is not limited to a select few, it is open to everyone, it is open for you. This invitation is not limited to a certain race. It is for both Jews and Gentiles, black men, white men, yellow men, red men, yea, all men. This invitation is not limited to a certain gender. It is for male and female. This invitation is not limited to a certain economic class. It is for the rich, the middle class, and the poor. This invitation is not limited to a certain educational class. It is for educated as well as the uneducated. This invitation is not limited to certain sinners. It is for all sinners. This invitation is for drunkards, for revilers, for extortioners, for idolaters, for fornicators, for adulterers, for the effeminate, this invitation is for all, it is an invitation for you. God is calling your name, Jesus says, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest (salvation). Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest (in His service) unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).” None of us are so good that we need not be saved or so bad that we cannot be saved. This is the greatest love story; God extending the greatest invitation!

The Greatest Simplicity *“believeth”*

The word believeth denotes the greatest simplicity. Salvation is so simple that sometime we fall over it or miss it because of its simplicity. Paul wrote, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).”

Salvation is by grace, through faith. Salvation is by faith alone. Faith is the only avenue, channel, or means of appropriating, taking, or embracing the free gift of eternal life. Biblical faith must have the right object, that object is the Savior, Jesus Christ. Biblical faith involves believing Jesus is who He said He is. Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, and the Savior of the world. Biblical faith also must have the right content which is the work of the Savior. Biblical faith involves believing what Jesus did. Jesus died, was buried, and rose again to pay the sin debt of the world. Biblical faith involves believing what Jesus said about salvation. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life (John 6:47).” “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).”

Satan is a liar and can never be trusted. He confuses, distorts, and twists the simple plan of salvation. Salvation is not by works. It is not by water baptism, church membership, or performing good deeds. Salvation is not based on our self effort or on our good works, but on the work of the Savior. Our works is an evidence of our salvation, but not the means of our salvation. We are saved to perform good works. Salvation involves trusting completely or totally the work of the Savior. Jesus paid our sin debt. It is really that simple. This is the greatest love story; God has provided the greatest simplicity for salvation, by faith in the finished work of Jesus, the Savior!

The Greatest Person ***“in him”***

The phrase “in him” denotes the greatest Person. There is no person greater than Jesus. Jesus said, “I am Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Revelation 22:13).” Jesus is greater than any king, queen, emperor, president, or head of parliament. Jesus is greater than Abraham Lincoln, He is greater than Thomas Jefferson, and He is greater than Martin Luther King Jr. Jesus is King of Kings. He is the Lord of Lords. He is God’s only begotten Son. He is Mary’s little baby, (the incarnate Son of God, God in the flesh, 100% God and 100% man). He is the Savior of the world. Jesus is our burden barer and our heavy load sharer. Jesus is joy in sorrow and hope for tomorrow. Jesus is a friend to the friendless. He is hope for the hopeless. He is food for the hungry, water for the thirsty. He is everything that you need. This is the greatest love story; Jesus is the greatest person!

The Greatest Escape ***“...should not perish”***

The phrase “should not perish” denotes the greatest escape. God is a God of love, but he is also a God of judgment. God is a God of wrath; God is a God that will punish sin. Paul wrote, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7-8).” Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).” The word “destroy” in this verse does not mean annihilation, but complete separation from God in the Lake of Fire for eternity. Praise God; thank God for the greatest deliverance! My friends may turn their backs against me, but I will not perish. My spouse may leave me, but I will not perish. My children may put me in an old folk’s home, but I will not perish. I might lose my job, but I will not perish. I might lose my car, but I will not perish. I might lose my home, but I will not perish. I might lose my health, but I will not perish. I might die today, but I will not perish. “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this (John 11:25-26)?” Jesus also said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand (John 10:27-29).” This is the greatest love story; praise God, thank God for the greatest escape!

The Greatest Contrast ***“but”***

The word “but” is a conjunction and denotes the greatest contrast. The greatest contrast is between those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ or those who are related to Adam and those who are related to Christ. The greatest contrast is between the children of darkness and the children of light. The greatest contrast is between the saved and the lost. The greatest contrast is between a sinner and a saint; and the only difference between a sinner and a saint his or her relationship to the Savior. The greatest contrast is between eternal damnation and eternal life. The greatest contrast is between the wrath of God and the love of God. Paul said “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through

Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).” Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad (Matthew 12:30).” “Then shall he say also unto theme on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matthew 25:41).” “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).” This is the greatest love story; the greatest contrast.

The Greatest Assurance ***“have”***

The word “have” denotes the greatest assurance. We live in a world of uncertainty. However, in an uncertain world, God promises are always yea, yea, and never nay. Paul wrote, “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, (Romans 3:4).” The Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative word of God. We are certain of the truthfulness and accuracy of God’s Word. Paul wrote, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good (Numbers 23:19)?” John wrote, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).” When we refuse to believe truth, the only thing that is left to believe is a lie. We can trust God’s word, we have the greatest assurance. There is no danger that the promises of God will not come to pass. The greatest love story reveals the greatest certainty or assurance. This is the greatest love story; God has provided the greatest assurance, His inspired, infallible, inerrant word!

The Greatest Possession ***“everlasting life.”***

Everlasting life is a term that describes the salvation that God provides to those who believe or trust in the completed, sufficient work of His Son, His death, burial, and resurrection. Everlasting life denotes more than eternal existence. It denotes not only the length of time that God’s favor extends to us who believe in his Son, but also the quality of existence that we enjoy. The phrase hath “everlasting life” denotes the greatest possession. The greatest possession is not your car, or your home, or your money or your silver, diamonds, or gold. The greatest possession is everlasting life. Everlasting life is more valuable than any amount of money or any amount of silver, diamonds or gold. Jesus said, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (Matthew 16:26)?” No amount of money or wealth can buy everlasting life. Everlasting life is not only the greatest possession; it is our greatest need. All of us have or possess eternal existence. All of us must spend eternity somewhere; either in Heaven, the New Jerusalem or in Hell, the Lake of Fire. Not only is everlasting life the greatest possession, but it is a present possession. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24).” John wrote, “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:11-13).” Many people deny this part of the verse and say that eternal life is only a future hope if one does this, that, and the other. This is a failure to understand the three aspects or tenses of salvation; the past, the present, and the future. I have been saved (the past) which has reference to justification. I am being saved (the present) which has reference

to sanctification. I will be saved (the future) which has reference to glorification. Therefore, there is a past aspect, a present aspect, and a future aspect of everlasting life. Believer's souls are saved now, but our bodies await glorification in the future. None of us can keep any of our physical possessions, but a saved person cannot lose any of his spiritual possessions. This is the greatest love story; everlasting life is the greatest possession!

The Greatest Appeal

Men have made appeals to governors of states, to the United Nations, and to presidents for their civil rights, for their freedom, and to save their physical lives. Those appeals were great, but this appeal is the greatest appeal because of what is at stake. It is the greatest appeal because it involves you making the greatest decision. It involves accepting or rejecting the work of the Savior. Jesus said, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins; whither I go, ye cannot come. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:21, 24)."

The Bible is a divine love story. The 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, the 66 books of the Bible, the 1189 chapters, the 31,102 verses, and the 788,280 words that is available for you to read is the greatest love story ever written. It is a love story of the greatest Being, loving in the greatest degree, expressing the greatest emotion, loving the greatest population. It is a love story of the greatest act, the greatest Gift, the greatest invitation. It is a love story of the greatest simplicity, the greatest Person, the greatest escape, the greatest contrast, the greatest certainty, and the greatest possession. It is story of how God so loved the world. It is a love story of how God loves you, my friend. God loves you and God loves me and I don't know about you, but I am glad about it. None of us deserve God's love, but He loves us anyway. Even though you are a low down dirty scoundrel, a low down dirty sinner, God still loves you. If you are on and off drugs, God loves you. If you are in and out of jail, God loves you. If you don't have a job and cannot pay child support or your rent because all your money is spent, God loves you. You may not care anything about God or anyone else, yet God still loves you. Yes He does!

I am glad that I accepted the free gift of everlasting life 7 years ago. What about you, my friend? Are you saved and on your way to Heaven or are you lost on your way to Hell? Do not minimize or ignore your sin problem. Too much is at stake. The Bible declares that "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (Romans 3:10)." Also, the Bible declares, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)." Finally, the Bible declares, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23)." The greatest message is that God loves you. Words cannot express how much God loves you and desires to save you. Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10)." Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (11 Peter 3:9)." God gave the greatest Gift, his only begotten Son. Jesus gave his life. Jesus died the most shameful degrading, and ignominious death known to man. He died on a Roman cross for the lost, was buried, and rose the third day. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13)." God loves you, He knows you, and He is willing and able to save you based on the work of His only begotten Son. God's love is manifested in his willingness to forgive sinners, but is not incompatible with punishing sinners who refuse to believe on His only begotten Son. God's love for the world does not mean He will ignore sin. The love of God is only one of the many attributes of God. Please do not erroneously conclude that love is antithetical to punishment. Hell is hot and eternity is too

long to spend there. Have you appropriated God's love by accepting God's Gift of love in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ? Unless you appropriate the love of God, you cannot have the remission of sins, the forgiveness of sin, escape the eternal Lake of Fire, or go to Heaven.

God has demonstrated His love for us in an infinite way. He has provided the only way of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6)." Stop trying and start trusting. Stop placing your trust in self and place your trust in the Savior. Stop placing your faith in your works and what you can do, but place your faith in the work of the Savior in what He has already done.

None of us are so bad that we cannot be saved and none of are so good that we need not be saved. We are all sick and are in need of a cure for our maladies or sins. Jesus is the cure. You can be saved right now by believing that Jesus died for your sins, and that He paid the penalty for your sin debt. Jesus paid the cost for the lost. Jesus suffered, bled, died, and rose the third day for us. Peter wrote, "Forasmuch as you know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (1 Peter 1:18-19)." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (1 Peter 3:18)." Now is the proper time to be saved. Now is the best time to be saved. Now is the right time to be saved. Now may be the last time you have to get right with God. Tomorrow is not promised to any of us and God has not promised to save anyone on tomorrow. The Bible says, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (11 Corinthians 6:2)." If you desire to be the best person you can be, accept Jesus today. If you want to be the best employer or employee; the best son or the best daughter; the best husband or best wife; the best father or mother, accept Jesus now. If you want forgiveness for your sins, salvation, everlasting life assuring Heaven as your eternal home, accept Jesus today. If you want to be all that you can be; the best life now, and in the world to come obey or accept Jesus today by faith in the work of His only begotten Son.

If you have appropriated the love of God, salvation and everlasting life by placing your faith in the work of the Savior, you are born again. You have a new nature, a new capacity, a new desire, a new attitude. The Bible declares, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17)." What a wonderful and great transition. Therefore, there are several things that you need to do, including but not limited to the following: be water baptized, join a Bible believing church, pray everyday (you talk to God), study your Bible everyday (God talks to you), and witness for Christ everyday (you talk for God) not in order to be saved, but because you are saved.

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