

John 3:16 So Great a Salvation: The Wonderful Promise

This series of five messages is collectively titled, “So Great a Salvation” based upon **Isaiah 61:10**: “**I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation....**” This third message deals with the most wonderful, personal promise ever made.

Our key verse is generally regarded as the greatest verse in the Bible: no other verse is so full of the gospel, with a complete survey of God’s redemption; no other single verse of scripture has brought salvation to so many people – the greatest statement of the gospel in the shortest possible space, God’s love being the theme:

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

- Grammatical Usage: “**loved**” or in the Greek, “agapaó” meaning, “cares for; benevolence”; “**perish**” or “apollumi” meaning, “utterly lost”; “**eternal**” or “aiónios” meaning, “agelong; unending”.
- Literal Interpretation: Because God cares for the world like this: the result was that He gave (His) Son, the only begotten, in order (and with the result) that every one who believes because of Him might not be utterly lost, but might have unending life.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word.

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD’S LOVE

- A. It is divine love. It is God who loved the world. The only love that we know anything about, apart from the revelation contained in this verse, is human love; but God, who is the author of all human love, is the great Lover who is mentioned here. His love is divine love, for “God is love” (**1 John 4:8; 16**), and this love is the greatest love in the world.
- B. It is eternal love. We read that “**God so loved the world...**” When did His love begin? God’s love had no beginning because God Himself had no beginning. It is not true to say that God did not love us until Jesus died for us. The fact is that God loved us and because of this He sent the Lord Jesus to die for us. This is what our verse tells us – look up and compare **Romans 5:8**. His love is an everlasting love (**Jeremiah 31:3**).
- C. It is an unlimited love. “**God so loved the world...**”, not just some part of it but all of it. Have you ever thought of the miracle of a universal love? Think of the millions of people in the world – people of all kinds and colors, good and bad, and yet God loves them all. He does not love us only when we are good and hate us when we are bad, but He loves us all the time, although of course He does not love our sin. ‘The love of God is broader than the measures of man’s mind; and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.’
- D. It is unmerited love. When we remind ourselves that God loves “**the world**” we at once realize how unmerited His love is, for there is nothing lovely in any of us for Him to love.

The word ‘**world**’ refers to the lost (**Luke 19:10**), the perishing world of men and women who are separated from God by their sin (**1 Corinthians 1:18**)

2. THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S LOVE

How did God’s love show itself? How do we know He loves us? His love is declared in the words, “**He gave His one and only Son...**”, and notice:

A. It was practical. We read here that God “**gave**”. Love must express itself, and it does so by giving. The friend, the lover, the parent – all express their love by their giving. The proof that God loves us is that He gave His Son to be our Savior. The verse does not say, ‘God so loved the world that He sent His Son’. This might mean that He came to do a special work which He accomplished, but that this work did not affect us in the slightest. The fact that God did not only send His Son but that He gave His Son, shows us that God has once-and-for-all given to us this great Gift, and He will never withdraw the Gift – **Romans 8:32**.

B. It was unique. God’s gift was that of “**his one and only Son**”. Think of the method he used to convey His love – He sent His own Son! This is the very heart of the gospel message; it is the meaning and significance of the Incarnation (**Galatians 4:4-5; 1 John 5:11-12**).

C. It was sacrificial. We read that He sent “**his...only Son**”! If God had had ten sons and had sent one to be our Savior this would have been a sacrificial gift, but He had only one Son – He gave His all.

3. THE PURPOSE OF GOD’S LOVE

What was God’s great objective in sending His Son into the world? This question is answered in the words “**that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life.**”

A. The breadth of the purpose – “**whoever**”. This does not mean everyone, but it does mean anyone. With the word ‘whoever’ we can go to anyone and tell them that God loves them. Some people think that salvation has been provided for only a certain number of people and therefore we must be careful that when we preach or share the gospel we preach it only to those people. But God loves everybody, everywhere!

B. The blessings of the purpose. Notice the words “**will not perish but have eternal life.**” Everybody, everywhere, who does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is perishing. Christ has saved us from that possibility if we come to Him and trust Him as our Savior – **John 10:28-29** – saved from perishing, but to life everlasting.

C. The wonder of the purpose. God’s offer is unlimited because it is the person who “**believes in him**” who is saved from perishing and receives the gift of everlasting life. We have His assurance.

What, then, does it mean to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? This is the most vital question we could ask, because we are only saved as we believe. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is to accept Him, to receive Him as our personal Savior, as **John 1:12** makes perfectly clear.

➤ Conclusion: Do you have this assurance that you have passed from death to life?