“The Greatest Verse In The Bible”

October 11, 2015

John 3:9-21

Please take your Bible in hand and open it to the greatest verse in the Bible. It’s found at John chapter three.

On January 8, 2009 at Dolphin Stadium in Miami Garden, Florida, at the 2008 NCAA Division One season champion-ship football game between the Florida Gators and the Oklahoma Sooners, Tim Tibow did something that had never been done before. He had a Scripture reference printed on his eye black under both of his eyes. That reference, as you might know, is the greatest verse in the Bible.

On January 9, 2012, this Scripture reference was Googled more times than any other time in history.

Harry and Esther Snyder began a restaurant hamburger chain in Baldwin Park, California in 1948. You can still purchase one of their burgers in California and the surrounding states from one of their restaurants. Today it’s a $500,000,000.00 company. And on the bottom of their soda cups, here’s what you’ll find: John 3:16.

The very popular fashion store, Forever 21, does this.

I asked someone this week if they knew John 3:16. He said to me he’d never heard of it. And I believe him. I quoted it for him and went on to tell him about the LORD.

I want to say something today about John 3:16 as **it is** the greatest verse in your Bible.

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.”*

It’s the greatest verse and here’s why. [Insert slide on John 3:16 as the greatest verse in the Bible]. Here’s what’s on my heart today.

GOD -- The Greatest Being
SO LOVED -- The Greatest Motive
THE WORLD -- The Greatest Group
THAT HE GAVE -- The Greatest Act in all of history
HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON -- The Greatest Gift
THAT WHOSOEVER -- The Greatest Opportunity
BELIEVETH -- The Greatest Simplicity
IN HIM -- The Greatest Human Being
SHOULD NOT PERISH -- The Greatest Promise
BUT -- The Greatest Difference
HAVE -- The Greatest Certainty
EVERLASTING LIFE. -- The Greatest Possession

What I’d like to do today is this. I want you to think carefully with me about the words and the message of this verse. Now, you might be here and know it by heart. But often when we know some things well, we eventually don’t know them at all unless we think carefully and let the message sink into our hearts again.

And you might be here today and have never understood the message of John 3:16. My hope is that you will be willing to let God have His way with you as you also think carefully about what it teaches.

First, God, the greatest being in existence.

Everywhere everything announces God’s existence. From the galaxies to the oceans to the skies to the animals to the human beings to atoms and electrons and protons and positive and negative charges to the brain and the blood that is made inside your bones to the baby that is formed in the womb of a mother. Everything announces God.

He’s the Creator. He’s independent of time. The first verse of your Bible says this. Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created…”

God created time on the first day of His creation. Genesis 1:3 *“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (4) And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. (5) And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”*

 Every time you sit down, He knows; and He’s fully aware of you when you stand up.

He sees you and He perfectly understands you. Psalm 139:1 *“O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. (2) Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. (3) Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.*

He’s the eternal God. Psalm 90:1 *“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. (2) Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”*

He knows everything you think or say or do. Psalm 139:4 *“For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. (5) Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. (6) Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”*

He knows where you are every minute of your day – because He’s God. Psalm 139:7 *“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (8) If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. (9) If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; (10) Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”*

First, God – the greatest being - the truth of His existence has satisfied the greatest minds of history.

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Here in John 3:16 we find the love of a perfect being. Here is the greatest motivation for anyone to do anything. What the Bible says about love stands above anything anyone has ever spoken or written on the subject. Here’s I John 4:8 *“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”* I John 4:16 *“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”*

Where would you be right now if it weren’t for love? If there is one thing that matters to each soul on this planet is that they are loved.

Now, look with me a little closer at 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.”*

Here is God in existence and here He is in action. If all you ever knew about God was that He existed and that He loved, that would be among the most satisfying things in your heart.

But that’s not what the truth is. The truth is this. “God so loved.” So is an adverb describing how much. He loved so much that He did something.

Now, notice that this is the love of a perfect being. And He’s not a perfectionist; as some of you might be. Instead, He loved in such a degree that He did something. He acted out His love on our behalf.

One man says it this way “All love is what God exemplifies so we can know it. Love is what God embodies so we can see it. Love is what God expresses so we can experience it.”

Folks, His love is a fact of life. It’s a fact of your existence. You are loved. And you are loved by a perfect being.

Now, remember what I told you God is. He’s all-knowing. He knows exactly what you are like in your life and in your attitudes and behavior. He knows you are a sinner. But that is not a call for the dis-love of your Creator. He cannot dis-love you because of your sin and your bitternesses and your poor choices and your unloving acts towards your neighbor.

God’s love is the kind of love every heart everywhere needs and wants more than money or fame or great ability. His love is what I needed more than anything on the day I was saved at the age of fifteen.

My father had no love for us children, probably because his father had no love for him. My father had a family. But he missed out on the most basic factor of life. He had no love.

So, when I heard the Gospel; for the first time in life, I found Someone Who loved me – period.

What else would you expect God to be like?

Well, His love is a “so –love.” And how much was it? He so loved that He gave His own Son. The Chinese translation of John 3:16 is quite powerful with this word “so.” In Chinese you’ll read, “God so passionately loved the world.”

Here’s what we have. We have an Eternal God Who is able to express Himself in an action that would and could and should matter to every single heart in the history of the world. His is the greatest motive for doing a thing. Can you see Him for Who He is? He’s been working on your behalf since the beginning of history. As you’ve heard me say numerous times. God’s heart is toward you.

Some people; maybe even you, feel like you’ve been abused or neglected or rejected. Here’s the one thing that makes life worth living. God so loved. That’s the greatest news any soul will ever hear. You can’t earn it. You don’t deserve it. Yet, every day of your life, you are loved by a perfect being.

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

None are exempt. No one is left out. Yes, there are many who refuse God’s interest in them. But He is not willing that anyone should perish.

Isaiah 53:6 *“****All*** *we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us* ***all****.”*

I Timothy 2:6 *“Who gave himself a ransom for* ***all****, to be testified in due time.”*

Titus 2:11 *“**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to* ***all*** *men,…”*

Hebrews 2:9 *“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****.”*

I John 2:2 *“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of* ***the whole world****.”*

“The Love of God” by Pastor Fredrick M. Lehman

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| “The love of God is greater far  Than tongue or pen can ever tell.It goes beyond the highest star  And reaches to the lowest hell.The guilty pair, bowed down with care,  God gave His Son to win;His erring child He reconciled  And pardoned from his sin.O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!It shall forevermore endure – The saints’ and angel’s song.” |

And the world is a world that has lost its way. The world is a world of selfish souls who simply want what they want. And for most of the human race; so often we want what we want while we don’t want God.

So, remember when we say that God loves the greatest group. It’s not a group of kind, gentle souls that share everything and care for everyone. It’s a world that loves darkness and loves sin and loves itself. That’s the kind of world that God loves.

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Here’s the love of God in action. Some say that God loves everyone. So therefore, everyone goes to Heaven. But is that what we find here?

No! What we find is this. God so loved that He acted on behalf of this sinful world. The world isn’t getting better morally. If anything; it’s growing colder morally; colder by the hour; so cold that people take guns and simply kill innocent people in school, at the job, in the Mall, in college, and in the Church today.

You see, God loves. But He loves with a specific goal in mind. He’s out to reach the hearts of the unlovely and the sinful and convert them into Christ-likeness. He’s out to reach the religious and the self-righteous. He’s out to reach the pimp and the prostitute.

And how do I know this? Because the Bible says “God so loved that He gave…” That’s the greatest act in all of history.

God acted.

You see; the world turned away from Him; but He loved. He acted.

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Fifth, His only begotten Son – greatest Gift

Giving is something we’ve all done. But, as someone has said, “We haven’t really given until we’ve given until it hurts.” It’s likely that you will sacrifice many things; but your son is not one you would give up easily.

Even to this day, military sons are still dying on the field of battle. My wife and I know a Pastor whose daughter died at the age of fifty-three. You personally know that someone here today had a son die at the age of thirty. To lose a child to death at any age is very difficult, to say the least.

It hurts to lose a son in death. It’s difficult. But it’s much more difficult to offer your Son to die on behalf of those who do not deserve it. Yet, this is exactly what God has done. God sent His only begotten son into this world to die. He was rejected by the Jewish leadership of His day. He was crucified on a Roman Cross. And yet, He was offered by His Father as the Sacrifice for your sins.

John 1:29 *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”*

Hebrews 10:10 *“…By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*. *(11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;…”*

Think about it like this. You stand as a sinner, condemned before God because you love your sin. You’ve sinned and you’ve broken God’s commands. Now, do you deserve His love? No!

Now think about his. My son Dan is very precious to me. He is very, very precious to me. I love him with all the love I could possibly have to love him with.

Now, would I, if I were the LORD, take the judgment that you, a sinner, deserves, and put it upon my son, my wonderful son, Dan?

That’s, in essence, what God did that day at Calvary, when He gave us His only begotten Son. You see, that Son of His, has become the greatest gift known to mankind.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son….”

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Fifth, His only begotten Son – the greatest Gift

Sixth, that whosoever – the greatest opportunity

What are you like in your heart of hearts? Whatever you are like, you are the one who is part of that “whosoever.” The LORD knows you specifically and personally.

Whosoever. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor, in Japan or in Brazil, a CEO or a street person, young or old, intelligent or unable to read, Jew or Gentile. You are one of those who is referred to in this Bible verse. This is certainly one of the reasons why this is the greatest verse in the Bible. This is why missionaries go out into the world to preach the Gospel. It’s for “whosoever.” No one is exempt. This is why the Bible has been translated in nearly every language known to man.

我們從這一點就知道了愛：基督為我們捨棄了自己的生命，我們也應該為弟兄捨棄生命。

Ибо так возлюбил Бог мир, что отдал Сына Своего Единородного, дабы всякий верующий в Него, не погиб, но имел жизнь вечную.

Car Dieu a tant aimé le monde qu'il a donné son Fils unique, afin que quiconque croit en lui ne périsse point, mais qu'il ait la vie éternelle.

And this is also the reason why, on the day He ascended into Heaven said this to His disciples. “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel.”

One of the great preachers of the 18th century was Pastor John Calvin. Here’s what he wrote about John 3:16 and the world being so loved by God. “The whole matter of our salvation must not be sought anywhere else than in Christ, so we must see whence Christ came to us and why He was offered to be our Savior.

Both points are distinctly stated to us. Namely, that faith in Christ brings life to all, and that Christ brought life, because the Heavenly Father loves the human race, and wishes that they should not perish.” (J. Calvin “Commentaries Vol. 17”).

Isn’t this amazing. Anyone anywhere can have this gift. It’s really the greatest opportunity known to man.

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Fifth, His only begotten Son – the greatest Gift

Sixth, that whosoever – the greatest opportunity

Seven, believeth – the greatest simplicity

Do you see what anyone and everyone must do in order to receive this amazing gift? You must believe in order to receive.

A gift is a gift. It can’t be bought by you or it’s now a purchase. It can’t be merited by you or it’s achieved. It can’t be earned by you or it’s deserved. You can’t work for it. You can’t pay for it. You don’t deserve this gift. Otherwise, it’s not a gift.

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

Ephesians 2:8 *“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.”*

Folks, there is nothing so simple as believing. It is only through faith, through simple, child-like faith that the gift of God is received. There’s no other way; none. It’s very possible that many people have made Christianity so burdensome that they think only religious people want it or that only religious people try to get salvation by being religious. But that’s not what God wants. What He wants is for you to know that if will believe, you will be saved. It’s that simple.

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Fifth, His only begotten Son – the greatest Gift

Sixth, that whosoever – the greatest opportunity

Seventh, believeth – the greatest simplicity

Eighth, in Him – the greatest human being

What does that say? It says a whole lot about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It says that God’s offer of salvation is found not in a religion or in a philosophy or in a statement repeated over and over. Instead, it’s found in a Person; one man; God’s only begotten Son.

It’s the object of your believing. What must you do to be saved? Believe in Christ and Christ alone. Your salvation is found in man; and not just any man; but the Man Who was given to you by God, the Father, as an offering for your sin; the greatest human being to ever walk the earth.

First, God – the greatest being

Second, so loved – the greatest motive

Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Fifth, His only begotten Son – the greatest Gift

Sixth, that whosoever – the greatest opportunity

Seventh, believeth – the greatest simplicity

Eighth, in Him – the greatest human being

Ninth, should not perish – the greatest promise

The original word here is απολλυμι. It’s translated just three ways all through the Bible: “Perish,” “to be lost,” or “to be destroyed.”

If I were to say to you that a cargo ship capsized off the coast of the Bahamas last week and 33 people “perished,” what would that mean to you? It means exactly the same thing in this passage.

And God is not willing that any should perish. II Peter 3:9 *“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.”*

This is the greatest promise you will ever hear. God provided His Son as the Sacrifice for your sin. Why? So that, by believing in Him, you would not perish.

First, God – the greatest being

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Third, the world. – the greatest group

Fourth, that He gave – the greatest act in all of history

Fifth, His only begotten Son – the greatest Gift

Sixth, that whosoever – the greatest opportunity

Seventh, believeth – the greatest simplicity

Eighth, in Him – the greatest human being

Ninth, should not perish – the greatest promise

Tenth, but have everlasting life – the greatest possession

Have = present tense. There may be many, many possessions you are enjoying right now. But everlasting life must be the greatest. You see, at the moment you believe on Jesus Christ, you receive the free gift of eternal life.

John 1:12 says this. ***“****But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:…”*

This life is not all there is. Actually, we all know that this earthly realm is our temporary dwelling place. After this life, we no longer exist in time. We exist in eternity.

And we were not meant to only live in time. God has made a way for you to experience everlasting life. That means when you leave this earthly realm that you will enter into God’s presence and live with Him eternally.

For the Believer in Christ, absent from the body is present with the LORD.

So, what will you do with John 3:16? This verse is the greatest verse in the whole Bible.

So, what will you do this week? What will you do today? Why not seek out one specific person this week and present John 3:16 to them? Tell them the Good News of this greatest verse in all the Bible.

You could ask this question “Do you know what the greatest verse in the Bible is? And then share with them exactly what it teaches.

And finally, a word to those who have never put their trust in Jesus Christ.

The greatest need in every heart and the largest problem in every life is your sin and the fact that your sin is what separates you from God. The Prophet Isaiah said. *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”*

Yet, out of love, Jesus became the Substitute for your sins.

The Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans says this. Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” and (Romans 6:23) “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

There’s only one way to receive God’s Salvation. It’s through God’s Son. And here’s how. The Bible says Acts 20:21 *“… repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Will you repent and exercise faith towards Him?

Today is the day of Salvation? What will you do about the condition of your heart for eternity?

REPENT - “Will you change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation?”

BELIEVE - “Will you simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins?”

Here’s a simple salvation prayer for you to pray if you’ve never trusted the LORD for His free gift of eternal life. Salvation Prayer

* “LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of your grace. I believe that You sent Your Son to the Cross to die for me. Please forgive me of all my sins and make me Your child. Thank you.”

Everyone who calls upon the Name of the LORD will be saved.

Now please turn with me to Hymn # 157 “The Love of God”