

*He Loved Me . . .*

*He Loves Me Lots*

*The Gospel of John*

Text

John 3:16-21

Title

***“Not that It’s a Competition,  
but God Loves Me 3:16”***

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**“I’d break out in hives if I had to sing that song in every show.”**

- The singer - Robert Plant, quoted in 1988.
- The song - *Stairway to Heaven*.

In 1975 Mick Jagger told *People* magazine, “I’d rather be dead than sing *Satisfaction* when I’m 45.” He’s 78, and though he might be dead and not know it, he continues to perform it.

**You are likely unfamiliar with Henry Moorhouse.**

He was a young minister D. L. Moody met in England. Moorhouse introduced himself by saying, “I’ll preach for you in America!” Moody politely said, “If you should ever get to Chicago, come down to the church, and I will give you a chance to preach.”

Months later, Moorhouse telegraphed Moody to say he was in Chicago. Moody agreed for Moorhouse to preach when he was away. Upon returning, Moody asked his wife how the young preacher did.

"Oh, he is a better preacher than you are," his wife said. "He is telling sinners that God loves them." "That is not right," said Moody. "God does not love sinners."

"Well," she said, "you go and hear him. He has been preaching all week and he has only had one verse for a text. It is John 3:16."

Moody went, heard Henry Moorhouse preach on that one verse and afterward said it was on that night that he first clearly understood the Gospel and God's great love. Moody said, "I have preached a different Gospel since, and I have had more power with God and men since then."

**According to pulpit lore, every sermon Moorhouse preached was from John 3:16.**

He did not, however, preach the same recycled sermon. They were different.

**John 3:16 is the inexhaustible declaration of the love of God for the loved of God.**

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 Believe In Jesus & You Are The Loved Of God Who Will Not Perish, and #2 Don't Believe In Jesus & You Are The Loved Of God Who Will Perish.

**#1 - Believe In Jesus & You Are The Loved Of God Who Will Not Perish (v16)**

- Herschel Hobbs called it "the Gospel in superlatives."
- Martin Luther called it "the Bible in miniature."
- A. T. Robertson referred to it as "the Little Gospel."
- Jerry Vines calls it "The Gospel in a nutshell" and says, "If all the other verses in the Bible were lost but this one, we would nonetheless still have them since all the rest of the verses of the Bible are contained in John 3:16."

A little child can understand it even though all the scholars of the ages cannot fathom its depth.

Your Bible may have these verses in red, but verses 16-21 are John's comments about Jesus' words that end at verse fifteen:

1. First, in John 3:16, the Cross seems to be a past event.
2. Second, Jesus never refers to Himself as God's "only begotten Son."

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The translators of the NKJV from which I am reading made a good choice adding a comma:

- The words *before* the comma declare the love of God for the world by sending Jesus.
- The words *after* the comma describe the response of the loved of God to the invitation of Jesus.

We start in the heavenlies, with, "For God...". It reads, "For **The** God." He is **the** Almighty God of the Bible, Creator of the universe.

God desires to have a relationship with His creation. He doesn't need it, but He desires it.

I came across this worth-sharing quote: "Unless the universe created itself, the 'natural' revelation of God through creation is supernatural revelation" (Michael Svigel).

The description of Christians as Evangelicals is tainted, associated with behaviors unbecoming of a believer. It has become a media slur. It's shameful because The God we serve *is* evangelical, not willing that sinners perish.

"For God so *agape*..." We are talking about pure, spiritual love. It is a love that desires to give. It does not depend on the worthiness of the one loved but on the nature of the the one who loves.

There is more than *agape*. "God **so** loved..." The little word intensifies the pure, spiritual *agape* of God. God's *agape* is "**so** *agape*."

Jerry Vines describes the scope of it:

*There was never a time when God began to love you. God's love reaches to eternity past, before you were born. Before the Earth was created and before the sun, the moon, and stars existed, God loved you. God's love reaches to eternity; there will never be a time when God will cease to love you. When the heavens roll away like a scroll and the stars fall from their sockets like chunks of coal, God will still love you.*

"For God so loved the *kosmos*..." John uses the word seventy-eight times in his Gospel and twenty-four times in his three inspired letters. It *can* refer to the world system organized in antagonism to God, but most often, the word refers to the realm where human beings live and the people who live in that realm. In other words, the plain meaning of *kosmos*, translated as "world," is *anyone, anywhere, at any time*.

You may have friends who insist that "world" does *not* mean anyone, anywhere, at any time. They limit the word to those God chose in eternity past that He foreknew He would save.

His choosing excludes the majority of human beings He created, condemning them to the Lake of Fire for a decision they did not and could not make.

**John's use of "world" does not in any way suggest God's love was or is limited.**

Listen to three verses. Does God's "so *agape*" seem limited?

- In his first letter, John says, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (2:2).
- John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself."
- "We trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe" (First Timothy 4:10).

Jesus' death was sufficient for "the sins of the whole world." He saves any and all "who believe." The Cross has the power to "draw all to Him."

Biblical proof is foundational to any discussion. It is also good to see the broader moral context.

Our theology should not lead us to conclude something untrue of God.

I came across the following illustration:

*An off-duty fireman rushes into a burning orphanage to save the children. They cannot escape by themselves and can be saved only if he rescues them. He comes out bringing three of the thirty children.*

*Rather than going back in to save more children, the fireman goes over to the news media and talks about how praiseworthy he is for saving three children.*

*What about the other twenty-seven children? He had the means to rescue the children and was the only one who could. Do we view the fireman as morally praiseworthy? I suggest that we would not. Probably he would be charged with depraved indifference.*

***If we do not find that praiseworthy in humans, why would we find it praiseworthy in God?***

God cannot be guilty of depraved indifference. He can't be indifferent. He so loved the world. Not everyone will be saved, but everyone can.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

"Begotten Son" is better translated, "unique Son." In the first two chapters, John told us that Jesus is uniquely God incarnate, God in human flesh, fully God and fully human. He was always God and added humanity to His deity to be the one and only God-man.

R. G. Lee said, "Jesus was the only One ever born who had a heavenly Father, but no heavenly mother; an earthly mother, but no earthly father. The only One ever born older than His mother and as old as His Father!"

- As man, He could step in as a substitute for the death we all deserve as wages for sin.
- As God, His sacrifice was perfect. It satisfied God's holiness. The Father can declare "righteous" everyone who believes in His Son.

God "gave" Jesus. Quoting Jerry Vines again: "The eternal God confined Himself to the narrow dimensions of a woman's womb. When Jesus was born, God was born. The Infinite became an infant, the Creator became a creature, and God was in a cradle."

The physical circumstances of His birth were not what you'd expect for the Messiah. Don't overlook the moral circumstances of His birth and life. Jesus was thought to be illegitimate.

God incarnate lived an obscure life. When He was directed to begin His ministry, He never once used the prerogatives of His deity. He endured life as we do.

He was despised and rejected by His own people; falsely accused, illegally tried, convicted, beaten, scourged, and crucified. God "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever..." You Greek scholars will be able to verify the accuracy of the following quote:

*The transliteration of [the word "whoever"] is the Greek word pas. It is used 1,228 times in the New Testament. It is translated as "whoever," "all," "whosoever," and "every." It is a pronominal substantival adjective:*

- *As an adjective, it modifies the participle pisteuon (translated "believes").*
- *As a substantive, it fills the noun slot.*

- *As a pronominal, it functions as a pronoun.*

*Pas with the participle pisteuon occurs four times in John's Gospel (3:15,16; 6:40). **It carries the idea of totality. It means a totality and inclusion of all individual parts.***

Albert Einstein said, "If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself." The six-year-old explanation of what I quoted is this, "The addition of *pas* before the participle generalizes it to *every single person*. The best translation is: 'Anyone who believes.' The idea is non-restrictive. The idea is *anyone... anywhere... anytime*" (David Allen).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him..."

The "world" is not limited, and "whoever" is anyone. We conclude that God has given every person a capacity to believe.

Theologian Norman Geisler describes our capacity to believe by saying it has been "effaced, not erased; limited, not lost; damaged, not destroyed." The best way I know to put it is that God the Holy Spirit frees our will, enabling us to *receive or reject* Jesus.

Earlier in the Gospel of John, we read, "As many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (1:12). You "believe," "receive," and then God regenerates you.

Gerald Borchert reminds us:

*God is the initiator and principal actor in salvation, and we should never think salvation originated with us. God, however, has given humanity a sense of freedom and requires us to make a choice. Accordingly, people are responsible for their believing. It is unproductive theological speculation, therefore, to minimize either the role of God or humanity in the salvation process. The Bible and John 3:16 recognize the roles of both.*

There must be an element of freed will. Love cannot be forced and remain love. "So agape" must be believed and received.

**T**alking about love can reduce it to something academic. It can take away its beauty the way dissecting a flower to understand it mars it.

Augustine said, "God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love."

God's love is personal. If you have a paper Bible, take the liberty to write in it, above the word "world," *your name*. If the Bible is God's love letter to you, as preachers often say, then John 3:16 is the message in miniature. Everything else expands upon those few words.

## **#2 - Don't Believe In Jesus & You Are The Loved Of God Who Will Perish (v17-21)**

I said nothing about "should not perish but have everlasting life." John comments on perishing in verses sixteen through twenty-one. "Condemn, "condemned" (2x), and "condemnation" jump out at you.

In the original *Ghostbusters*, the guys were looking at a building for their headquarters. Harold Ramis said, "I think this building should be condemned. There is serious metal fatigue on all the load-bearing members, the wiring is substandard and completely inadequate for our power needs, and the neighborhood is like a demilitarized zone."

### **You could make a case that mankind ought to be condemned.**

- There have been close to 40mil abortions worldwide in 2021.
- Chicago is your kind of town if you are a murderer. Cook County has reported over one thousand murders so far this year in the Windy City.
- Murders will set records in at least twelve US cities in 2021.
- Each year, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide into various types of slavery.
- Twenty-two countries are currently at war.



- In July, the US named seven nations committing genocide or other atrocities.

### **God remains evangelical.**

Joh 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jesus saves:

- He saves in the Church Age in which we are living.
- He will continue to save during the seven-year Great Tribulation that will follow the resurrection and rapture of the church.
- He will continue to save during the thousand-year Kingdom of God on earth that follows the Great Tribulation.

There will be no more saving after the Millennial Kingdom.

All of mankind from all of time will have either received or rejected the love of God. Those who would not believe will be condemned.

Perish does not mean annihilated. Everyone lives forever. To “perish” is to be raised from the dead to suffer eternal, conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

Joh 3:18 “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.

Innocent until proven guilty doesn’t hold in Heaven. Humans are born guilty and condemned. Believe in Jesus, and God declares you, “Not guilty.”

Joh 3:19 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.

Atheists and agnostics throw up obstacles to believing Jesus:

- For some, it is the problem of pain. Why would an omnipotent, loving God allow suffering?
- For others, it might be science. They hide behind the failed theory of evolution; or they subscribe to the science fiction theory of an infinite number of universes.

The actual problem is their love of “darkness” so that they might remain “evil.” You don’t have to be a serial killer to be evil. Skip straight to the Tenth Commandment. Have you ever coveted anyone or anything belonging to someone else? You’re evil.

Joh 3:20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

“Snakes. Why did it have to be snakes?” Indiana Jones dropped a torch into the pit, and the asps scattered.

Jesus is the light dropped into the world of men whose god is that serpent of old, the devil. The Word of God exposes sin. We can either *run* or *repent*.

Joh 3:21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Believers have been born of God, born again, born from above. Our spirit has come to life, and God the Holy Spirit is in us. We can see spiritually, and respond biblically.

God the Holy Spirit living in us ought to make a difference in how we live that “may be clearly seen, that [our deeds] have been done in God.”

**W**hen Henry Moorhouse fell ill and was on his deathbed, he looked up and told his friends, “If it were the Lord’s will to raise me again, I should like to preach from the text, God so loved the world.”

**You & I preach John 3:16 everyday.**

Think about this personal paraphrase of verse twenty-one: "I know the truth and have come to the light and thus it ought to be clearly seen that I am walking in the enabling of God the Holy Spirit."