

# **For God so loved the world, that He gave is only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal**

## **God's Kind of Love**

**By Pastor Francis Williams**

John 3:16 is arguably the most well-known verse in the Bible. It is printed on coffee-mugs, pasted on Church walls, used in protests, flown on banners in sports arena and sung by choirs. One reason for its popularity is that John 3:16 contains the greatest promise in all of Scripture: the promise of eternal life to all who believe in Jesus.

The first thing John 3:16 states is the identity of the One who makes the promise. He is God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe; The God who called Abraham and promised to bless him and make him a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3). He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of Israel, the author of salvation. He is the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The God who has revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John says that this "God so loved the world." The adverb "so" in John 3:16, might be a tiny word, but it is not trivial. There are two ways in which "so" in John 3:16 has been understood. On the one hand, it is understood first as the degree to which God loves the world. In this first sense, John is stressing the magnitude of God's love. On the other hand, the adverb "so" can be understood as explaining the manner in which God loved the world. In other words, John is saying this how (not how big) God loved the world.

Certainly, there are passages in the Bible that affirm the magnitude of God's love. For example, Paul prayed that the Ephesian Believers "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge..." (Eph. 3:18-19). Also, in Romans 8:35ff, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life...nor any other thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." These verses and others make it clear that God's love is inexhaustible.

The adverb "so" in John 3:16 may, however, also indicate the manner in which God loved the world. Let's imagine that someone asks the question, How did God love the world? The answer is: "This is how God loved the world. God has shown His love for the world by giving His only begotten Son." This, I believe, is the message John wants to convey to us through the word "so."

We ought to be amazed that God loved the world in such unspeakable manner. It is a world that is in darkness and loves darkness (Jn. 12:46; 3:19), hates Jesus and His followers (Jn. 7:7; 15:18, 19; 17:14), is under judgment (Jn. 12:31) and ruled by the devil (Jn. 14:30; 16:11; 1 Jn. 5:19). Yet this world is the object of God's love. He loved the world by giving His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the world. The great promise is that whoever believes in God's Son would not perish but have eternal life. As 1 John 4:10 reminds us, "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."

May we continually receive this love by faith, and with gratitude, pass it on to others so that God may be glorified in all things.