



Volume 14 Issue 44

November 3, 2019

JOHN 3:16: THE GREATEST VERSE

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him,” John 3:16-17. It’s been said that John 3:16 is the most famous verse in the bible. While some identify it by its presence in football stadiums, others know it by heart as a concise, powerful summation of the saving love of God in the gospel. Someone once broke down the verse into twelve segments to magnify the true greatness of what is being expressed. **For God.** The greatest Lover. **So Loved.** The greatest Degree. **The World.** The greatest Company. **That He Gave.** The greatest Action. **His Only Begotten Son.** The greatest Gift. **That Whoever.**

The greatest Opportunity. **Believes.** The greatest simplicity. **In Him.** The greatest Attraction. **Shall Not Perish.** The greatest Assurance. **But.** The greatest Difference. **Have.** The greatest Promise. **Eternal Life.** The greatest Blessing. There truly is no greater message than the announcement to all the world that God loves us all so much we were worth sending His Son to die for. That’s a powerful statement. “I would die for you.” We often recognize of all the great statements signifying unparalleled devoted love, it is the statement putting our life on the line which surpasses them all. And the greatest One of all has assured us all that He so loves us all. I would like to address the segment describing belief as the “greatest simplicity.” While I agree, given what all God could have

the right to demand of us, believing in His Son is graciously simple. Yet, there can often be misunderstandings about the nature of belief which leads some to believe it's too simple. Many have taken that statement of believing in Christ to be so simplistic to boil it down to merely acknowledging that Jesus is the Son of God who died for us. Jesus, Himself, said the kind of belief we are called upon to bring ourselves to is an actual work which requires some action on our part. "Therefore they said to Him, 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent,'" John 6:28-29. When Peter preached the gospel on Pentecost, persuading the Jews to believe that Jesus was the prophesied Christ who had risen from the dead, we are told what they did which describes how they believed in Him. "'Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.' Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter said to them,

'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,'" Acts 2:36-38. It then describes what those who received his word did...they were baptized. "So then, those who had received his word were baptized," Acts 2:41. What were all those who were baptized referred to as? They were those who believed. "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common," Acts 2:44. When Paul and Silas had the opportunity to preach the gospel to the jailer they stopped from committing suicide, there is a clear description of what belief entails. "And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" Acts 16:29-30. He is told that in order to be saved he must believe in the Lord Jesus. Paul says in Romans, "How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" Romans 10:14. So Paul and Silas preach to him about Jesus and there is an action demonstrating their belief which the scripture later identifies is what it means to believe in Jesus. "They said,

‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your whole household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household,” Acts 16:31-34. Believing in Jesus is so much more than acknowledging He existed or even acknowledging He died on a cross for us. Paul details that in essence it is believing in the power of His resurrection which gives us life and freedom from sin. We must believe that He died and was buried which is confirmed in our baptism uniting us with His death. “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life,” Romans 6:3-4. This part of baptism of uniting with his death is so important, because, essentially our belief is directly

connected to our belief that if Jesus rose from the dead to live again, God is making us become alive again rising out of the waters of baptism. “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him,” Romans 6:8-9. To believe in Christ is to be baptized in Christ, since it is essentially our belief in the power of His resurrection which gives life to us from the death of sin. We must believe in the working of God which takes place in our rising out of the waters of baptism which cleanses us from sin. “...having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead,” Colossians 2:12. –Daniel Ruegg

“A wise son accepts his father’s discipline, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. From the fruit of a man’s mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the treacherous is violence.” Prov 13:1-2



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Blessing Rather Than Cursing Challenge

1 Peter 3:8-9 *"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead," 1 Pet. 3:8-9.* In light of the amazing example of forgiveness displayed recently in a court room setting, it makes us think how easy it is for us in situations where we have been wronged or offended to curse such individuals rather than bless them. As I think about how difficult it is to refrain from returning evil for evil or insult for insult, I think perhaps I am not training my heart and mouth to be ready in those instances. So here's the challenge: for the rest of this month, each week choose someone who has brought evil or insult towards you, or perhaps towards someone you know. Focus on that individual each week, and offer prayers of blessings towards them. Pray for their salvation. Pray for good to come into their life. "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven," Matthew 5:44-45. Perhaps by the end of the month we will develop a new habit which will train our hearts to bless rather than curse.

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

John 10:7-17

"So Jesus said to them again, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.'"