

- ***Read II Peter 3:14-18/Prayer*** As he speaks of the coming judgment and the end of this world, Peter says that our full focus ought to be on seeking out the salvation that can be obtained from God. Seeking God's salvation was a central message of all of the writers of the New Testament, but that doesn't mean that all of them approached it in the same manner. In fact, Peter says that Paul's writings were actually quite difficult to understand at times. There were some who took the difficult writings and twisted them in such a way that the pure message of God was distorted to the point that it would lead them to further destruction and not salvation. Peter's advice to them? They needed to be on guard and make sure that they were not carried away in error and therefore lose their hope of heaven.
- We recognize that Paul wasn't the only one who spoke things about faith that were at least slightly difficult to understand. In fact, we have been looking from time to time at some of Jesus's difficult teachings. One teaching of Jesus that we haven't discussed is found in **John 3:1-9**. Jesus tells Nicodemus that one must be born again if he wants to see the kingdom of God, and this just really blows Nicodemus's mind to the point that he just really doesn't know how this can be so.
- Jesus continues on from there to focus on how faith is that which will save a person. Our Lord sums it all up pretty simply in a single verse, and that verse is probably the most well known in all of Scripture. **John 3:16** is a complicated verse. In fact, I believe that this verse is one of the most simplistic in Scripture to understand. This morning, I want to dial things back to the basics and consider 5 simple truths that we find here in **John 3:16**.

I. There is a God. "For God"

- A. Before all else, this verse begins with the claim and affirmation that there is a God. **Genesis 1:1** tells us that before all things there was nothing but God. Then He is the one that created all things. He spoke and the things of this universe came into existence, including mankind on the 6th day. (**Gen. 1:26-28**)
- B. Obviously, none of us were around to see God create all things. None of us were witness to that, so why would we simply take the word of some book that these things are so? We don't simply have to take this book's word for it, but all we need to do is look around us. Can we honestly look around at this world and think that it came about by chance? Can we honestly think that there wasn't a Master Designer behind the creation of it all?
- C. In fact, the writers of this book make that argument for the existence of God through the natural world around us. The Apostle Paul makes the argument that the Gentiles should've known about the God of heaven based upon His power being shown by the world all around them. (**Rom. 1:18-20**)
- D. The fool would seek to deny the existence of God because he refuses to submit to a higher power (**Psa. 53:1**), but the logical mind recognizes that there must be something greater out there. (**Acts 17:22-28**) This text of **John 3:16** gives us the simple truth that there is a God.

II. He loves you. "So loved the world"

- A. Going back to creation and the garden, it doesn't take long for us to recognize this as being true. Everything that God created He said was good, and that includes us...the crown jewel of His creation. (**Genesis 1:31**) The world that He created for us to live in was good. It was perfect. It left us with no need.
- B. He created man to be in perfect harmony with Him in the garden. The relationship was flawless, and there was peace between God and His creation of man that He loved so much.
- C. However, things quickly changed with man rebelling against God and sinning, but that didn't mean that God stopped loving us. In fact, He continued to shower His love on His greatest creation. Time and time again throughout the Bible we see God telling his creation that they can cast their cares upon Him and seek out His help and He will aid them because He loves and care for them. (**I Peter 5:6,7**)
- D. His promise of help in this life certainly does show us His love, and it proves to us the simple truth of this verse that God loves you and me.

III. He gave His Son for you. "that He gave His only begotten Son"

- A. It was man that soiled the relationship between God and man. Our sin causes there to be the issues that exist between us, yet God stepped forward and showed His ultimate love for us by sending His Son to die for us. (**Romans 5:6-8**)
- B. The Apostle John expounds upon this truth of God's love being demonstrated through the giving of His Son in **I John 4:7-10**.
- C. God's perfect love is clearly seen in everything that He has done for us, and in no greater way is that love proven than in the fact that Jesus Christ left the glory of heaven to become a man and die for all of mankind. (**Phil. 2:5-8**)

IV. You can believe and be saved. "that whoever believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"

- A. There are some who would deny that this verse speaks to all people. The Calvinist would say that only God's elect will have the ability to respond to the Gospel invitation of salvation, but this verse simply doesn't give that indication. God doesn't care who you are because He is not a God of partiality. **(Romans 2:11,12)** Whether male or female, Jew or Gentile, slave or free...it doesn't matter in the eyes of God because all people can be saved through the power of the Gospel. **(Romans 1:16)**
- B. Jesus Himself told the people, **"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."** **(Matt. 11:28)** Peter agrees with this statement later in his writings when he says that God is slow about His promises and that He doesn't want for any person to perish, but He wants for all people to come to repentance. **(II Peter 3:9)**
- C. No matter who you are, you can be saved. No matter your past sins. No matter the guilt you feel in your heart...everything about you can be made new and clean through belief in Jesus and obedience to His Gospel. **(I Peter 3:21; I Cor. 6:9-11)**
- D. This simple verse tells us that even you can be saved. Even I can be saved because there is a God who created me, loves me, and sent His son to die for me.

V. You can fail to believe and be lost. "shall not perish"

- A. On the other side of the spectrum from the Calvinist are the universalists who believe that every single person will be saved no matter their deeds in this life, but that can't be true if this verse is true. There would be no need for belief in Jesus if everyone is going to be saved anyways. But this verse says that belief in Jesus is necessary to avoid perishing. Therefore, we must logically conclude that those who fail to believe will be lost.
- B. As has already been mentioned, our sins have separated us from God. So it isn't that our failure to believe is our greatest sin. Our greatest mistake is sinning to begin with so that we are separated from God. Those who fail to believe in Jesus simply ignore the life saver that has been thrown to them so that they might be saved from drowning in sin.
- C. Belief in Jesus Christ is the only way to the salvation that God offers. Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. **(John 14:6)** Those who have sinned and have failed to believe in Him will be lost and without hope of eternal salvation. **(John 3:17-20)**
- D. Just as simply as belief will lead to salvation, so will a lack of belief lead to perishing and condemnation. The truth of one means the truth of the other.

Sometimes it is good for us to take a moment to just go back to the basics. Sure there is much tough meat that can be tackled so that our faiths may be strengthened, but the basics need attention the same. It's good for us to consider those things that are the basis of our faith, and is there anything more basic in our faith than the Gospel of Jesus Christ? This verse of **John 3:16** is the Gospel in a nutshell, and we would do well to keep the simple message of the Gospel in our hearts each and every day. The truths of this verse will never change. They are set in stone. It is just up to us whether or not we will take these truths to heart and act upon them as we ought. May God help us to believe in Jesus. May we have a faith that is active and thriving, and may we serve Him well in everything that we do, so that we may be with Him in heaven for all eternity.