

TITLE: G. R. A. C. E. (God's Riches At Christ's Expense)

TEXT: JOHN 3:16

INTRO: What is the "best known Bible verse in the world?" Clearly this is subjective (opinion), but a Google search for this phrase yielded 7 results, all of which are **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.*" There may be no verse in the Bible that more succinctly states God's love for His creation than these 25 words spoken by Jesus to Nicodemus.

I. "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD" (THE SOURCE OF GRACE):

- A. *FOR GOD* – "For" means He is building on what He just said to Nicodemus in v. 15 (i.e., that He would be lifted up, and that whoever believes on should have eternal life – the same thing He says here in v. 16). *For God* – This all starts with God. He is the Father, He is the Creator of Heaven & Earth, He is the Creator of all life. So when Jesus talks about the ultimate gift of salvation, it is eminently appropriate that He begins with God the Father – the source of all that is good (**James 1:17**).
- B. *SO* – "So" seems to communicate enormity (i.e., God loved us *so* much...) – Some translations even mistranslate it like this, but the word actually means "in this way, thus, like this" and refers to *how* He expressed His love. It communicates that a very important reason is coming next. It's not surprising then that in the Greek this is the first word of the sentence!
- C. *LOVED* – Here is the beautiful word "*αγαπαω*" (verb form of "agape"). This is **not** the kind of love that feels closeness to someone (i.e., the "phileo" kind of love that you can only feel for someone you know personally). It's the love that we can and should have for *every* human being – the love that seeks another's best interest, regardless of who he is.
 - 1. God commands us to have this love (**John 13:34; 15:12-13; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8; 1 Jn 3:11; 3:23; 4:7-8,11; 2 Jn 5**).
 - 2. God provided the ultimate demonstration of it. To seek someone's best interest might be to save his life. But are you willing to sacrifice your child to save him? *God made us, gave us free will, allowed us to ruin His perfect creation with our sin, then sent His Son to live in our impure world and be completely subject to its sin & temptation. This is amazing enough. But then He allowed Him to be murdered by His disobedient creation, all for His purpose of love.
- D. *THE WORLD* – the **entire** world (He did this for everyone that has ever lived or ever will live) – no distinctions, no respect of persons. The great act of love Jesus is about to tell us about was done for everyone (**John 6:51; 1 Tim 2:6**).

II. "THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON" (THE ACTION OF GRACE):

- A. *THAT HE GAVE* – Here is the verb (the action) – God **gave** (He gave up, offered up, sacrificed) what belonged to Him (not us), and what He was not required to give up. We had no ownership, no rights or claims to this. It was a gift (free and undeserved)!
- B. *HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON*
 - 1. Although all humans are sons/children of God (as His offspring—**Acts 17:29**), and Christians are His spiritual sons (**Gal 4:6**), when it comes to "begotten," there is only one! "Begotten" designates God's personal hand in giving Jesus a human birth.
 - 2. This is the ultimate expression of love – giving up one's only child for someone else. How many can relate to this? Someone might be able to give his own life for someone else, but what about his own son (and *only* son)? Jesus said, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" - **John 15:13**), but nowhere does He say to lay down your own son's life! **Gen 22** – Abraham was told to do this, but stopped from actually doing it.
 - 3. If any, then how many of those can say they did it for people who hated him? (***Rom 5:6-8—Christ died for the ungodly... sinners**).

III. "THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM" (THE REQUIREMENT OF GRACE):

- A. *THAT WHOSOEVER* – Again, contrary to Calvinism's "limited atonement," "whosoever" means exactly what it says! This amazing love & grace of God was displayed in sending His only begotten Son to die *for the world!* The very next words are going to provide the response necessary on the part of every human being in order to reap the benefits of this incredible gift.
- B. *BELIEVETH IN HIM* – The Greek word means "to have faith in; to believe to be true; to place confidence in." This makes it clear that there is more to belief than just saying "I believe..." (which is just a statement of confession). If you truly believe in and place your confidence in Jesus as the Son of God, you'll strive to be obedient to **everything** He says!

IV. "SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE" (THE REWARD/GOAL OF GRACE):

- A. *SHOULD NOT PERISH* – perish (be destroyed; spiritual death—the very thing we all deserve and should've otherwise expected).
 - 1. Those that believe in Jesus *should not* perish. This is subjunctive mood, "the mood of moderate contingency, where the action is objectively possible, but not reality" (Summers, *Essentials of NT Greek*). So this verse does *not* express a guarantee that those believing in Jesus won't perish, just an objective possibility. In other words, more is required than just belief!
 - 2. Many times belief is used as a synecdoche (a part stands for the whole), where believing represents *everything* God requires.
 - 3. Because of God's love & grace in sending His only son to die for us, a dismal future is not guaranteed either! **There's hope!**
- B. *BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE* – There are only two options (perish & everlasting life). This is obviously a spiritual life (no physical life is everlasting). Ever since mankind realized that death awaits us all, we've been on a never-ending pursuit to prevent it – or at least delay it (e.g., Ponce de León's fountain of youth, the elixir of life, and even the Pool of Bethesda in **John 5**). If only mankind would put as much desire & effort into the pursuit of *spiritual* eternal life! *This* pursuit is short; spiritual life isn't hard to find (it's in the Bible), although it *can be* hard to maintain (it requires a life-long commitment)!

CONCLUSION: Rom 3:24—"*justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" John 3:16 perfectly described this grace to us (God's riches at Christ's expense). Though this gift cost Christ everything, it cost us nothing for it to be given (otherwise it wouldn't be a gift). But it costs us everything to **receive** it (**Luke 9:23**—deny yourself and take up your cross)! It requires a life commitment. Are you willing? God hopes so. After all, this was (and is) the goal of His grace!