

The theme of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ alone dawns with hope in John 3:15 – the first place in which “eternal life” occurs in John’s Gospel. John is clear that such life can only come to us if it is sent from Heaven in the Person of God’s only begotten Son (John 3:16). Let us rejoice this week in this great verse with so many promises and such a profound demonstration of God’s love as He “gives His only-begotten Son” for our salvation.

### Mon/Tues: Read John 3:16 and Romans 8:31-32

So?

There is scarcely a more famous in the Bible than John 3:16, variously translated as follows:

- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (New International Version)
- 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. (King James Version)
- 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. (New American Standard Bible)
- This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. (The Message)

In the culture of Christendom around us, what is at the root of the fond embrace of this verse by so many? Well, putting aside as unworthy of comment the sentimentalizing motivation which make some view this verse as a good luck charm (as well as the “easy believism,” which makes this verse find a home in the end-zone of many football games) we take the verse’s meaning from the actual emphasis in the first three words:

“For God *so* ... .” Here is a word of emphasis. The word “so” (placed first in the Greek – to emphasize “not merely that God loved the world, but that God *so* loved the world,” (Richard D. Phillips). As the Message translation says above: “*This* is how much God loved the world.”

The emphasis is on the greatness and scale of God’s love. In giving His only-begotten Son, God demonstrates His willingness to stoop that low to love this rebellious world. God demonstrates a love that cannot be measured – so great is the distance from God’s eternal glory up there to man’s undeserving wretchedness down here.

Second, the “world” means that spiritually hostile place which is wholly given over to Satan’s hatred of God and the sinful bondage he inflicts on all the sons of Adam. *This is how low God was willing to go to show the greatness of His love* – down even to the depths of this hellish world.

**Meditate and Pray:** There is nothing further that God can do now to demonstrate His love: a love that comes from Himself, and is given to us in the Person of His Son *not for anything in us, but just because God is such a giving God*. “This is the particular point that John 3:16 stresses – God’s love is a *giving* love,” (Richard D. Phillips).

This is the same message that we find in Romans 8:31-32. If God was willing to give us His most precious, “only begotten Son,” how much assurance should flow into our hearts that He will not fail *to give us anything* that we need to persevere until final victory. What confidence should be ours, knowing that God *so* loved us

that He sent His only begotten Son. How eagerly we are to respond by receiving by faith the gift of this only begotten Son and Savior!

Sing about the confidence we should have in God the Father because He gave up His only begotten Son for our sins (hymn # 463 in our hymnal):

1 A debtor to mercy alone,  
of covenant mercy I sing;  
nor fear, with thy righteousness on,  
my person and offering to bring.  
The terrors of law and of God  
with me can have nothing to do;  
my Savior's obedience and blood  
hide all my transgressions from view.

2 The work which his goodness began,  
the arm of his strength will complete;  
his promise is yea and amen,  
and never was forfeited yet.  
Things future, nor things that are now,  
nor all things below or above,  
can make him his purpose forgo,  
or sever my soul from his love.

3 My name from the palms of his hands  
eternity will not erase;  
impressed on his heart it remains,  
in marks of indelible grace.  
Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
as sure as the earnest is giv'n;  
more happy, but not more secure,  
the glorified spirits in heav'n.

### Wednesday: Read John 3:16; Psalm 139:1-7 & John 16:8-11

### A Calling and a New Name

How great our confidence should be to trust in God the Father because He gave us “His only begotten Son.” But today let’s think about how much confidence *God* has that His love will find many human hearts and souls to save! Not only is the Son full of admiration at the Father’s love, the Spirit also is committed to bringing God the Father glory for such amazing love, giving up His only begotten Son.

To be more specific: *if the Father* has dazzled the world by giving up His only Son; *if the Son* shows the extent of His own love in His willingness to be given for a lost world’s sins; then what will the Spirit do to demonstrate His own love for this lost world, in full agreement with the self-giving love of the Father and Son?

The answer is in Psalm 139:7 and John 16:8-11. He is willing to search hearts and find out sin until the sinner admits, “Where can I go from your Spirit?” (Psalm 139:7). God shows not only *love for sinners*, but by His Spirit He shows *His power* to cut into the hearts of sinners and to show them their sin. Yet he acts in such a loving way that the sinner is drawn to such heart surgery. Even though we sinners are adamantly defensive *towards anyone else* seeking to poke their fingers our closets full of skeletons, we are drawn into surrender to the “Searcher of Hearts” (Romans 8:27). That is who God the Father *is*: He is the One who knows “the mind of the Spirit” and is able to read there the Spirit’s omniscient, penetrating knowledge of the deepest part of our lives.

Give thanks that God knows us so well that He can *savingly use* His omniscience of our every thought to cause us to surrender to His knowledge in repentance and faith. As George MacDonald put it (with my adaptation of Reformed doctrine into these quotes to underline that God's special grace is only through Christ to the elect in Christ). MacDonald says:

With (saved sinners) God has a secret – the secret of a new name. In every man there is a loneliness, an inner chamber of peculiar life into which God only can enter.

And let us also give thanks, that when God's particular, convicting work of the Spirit finds our hearts, our response will be as particular and unique as God's personal knowledge of our life-situation.

The name which God gives us is one “which no man knows except he that receives it.” (Revelation 2:17) Not only then has each (saved sinner) his *individual* relation to God, but each has his *peculiar* relation to God. He is to God a peculiar being, made after his own fashion, and that of no one else. Hence he can worship God as no man else can worship Him.

C.S.Lewis, *George MacDonald, an Anthology*

**Meditate and Pray:** Father who searches hearts, please try our inward consciences, emotions and motivations. Test us and purify us deeply, from the inside out. Please protect us from the great danger of hypocrisy. Please keep us *dependent upon your knowledge of us*, and not what we think is our real knowledge of ourselves. Please enable us to begin each day with an absolute trust in you and a healthy distrust of ourselves. Please fashion our prayers by aligning our words with these precious verses:

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!  
And see if there be any grievous way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting! Psalm 139: 14, 23-24

### Thurs/Fri: Read John 3:16 & Genesis 22:9-14

### Proof of Sincerity

The ultimate proof of God the Father's love is His “giving His only begotten Son.” All through Scripture, in fact, God exalts the “giving of an only begotten son” as the ultimate proof of reverential obedience and love. In fact, God tests Abraham to reveal whether Abraham loves God so much as to give up his only begotten son of promise, Isaac. At just the right time, God stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, saying, “Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

God Himself has given it as a rule, that what is done by giving an only-begotten son gives assured testimony of reality and sincerity in the thing that is confirmed by it. So He says unto Abraham, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.” This way it may be known, or no way. And they are blessed conclusions that faith may make from this consideration:

“Now I know that there is forgiveness with God, seeing He hath not withheld His Son, His only Son, that He might accomplish it.” ...

What farther can any soul desire? What ground remains for unbelief in this matter? Is there anything more to be done? It was to manifest that there is forgiveness with Him, and to make way for the exercise of it, that God sent His Son, that the Son of God came into the world.

John Owen, *Works*, vol 6, pg 489

**Meditate and Pray:** This is the good news of John 3:16 – God *has* demonstrated the full extent and commitment of His loving purposes towards us! We may be sure, given the size of the gift which He has given, that God has given us an assured testimony of His sincerity in forgiving our sins. He would not have given His Son at all if He were not utterly committed to glorifying Himself as our forgiving God.

### Sat/Sun: Read John 3:16 & Genesis 22:15-18

### Every Doubt Silenced

How committed God is to being our God of forgiveness! He *promises* us forgiveness through blood – thereby demonstrating His willingness to forgive sinners. He *demonstrates* this commitment by giving His Son to be our blood sacrifice for sin, and He *personally applies* the forgiveness that comes through Christ by *sending Him* to deliver forgiveness into every elect heart that believes. God’s salvation is an *individual salvation*, applied deeply into every heart that is convicted of its sin and its need for Jesus.

But even these great gifts do not exhaust all that the Father has done. Not only His promise! Not only the gift of His only begotten Son! Not only the Holy Spirit personally applying the redemption purchased by Christ to every believing heart! He also binds Himself by an oath – just as He swore to Abraham through the words of the Angel of the Lord in Genesis 22:15-17:

“By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you ...”

God *did not need* to make an oath: He is Truth itself and is Faithful to keep all His promises! That should be enough! Or, as John Owen says, “God doth not give His oath to make His word or promise sure and steadfast ...” Why an oath when God’s Word and Character should be enough?

(This oath) gives assurance and security unto us of the Promise’s accomplishment ... (For God) knowing what great objections Satan and our own unbelieving hearts will raise against His promises, at least as to our own concernment in them, to confirm our minds, and to take away all pretenses of unbelief, interposes His oath in this matter.

What can remain of distrust in this case? If there be a matter in doubt between men, and an oath is interposed in the confirmation of that which is called into question, it is “an end,” as the apostle tells us, “Unto them of all strife,” (Heb. 6:16).

How much more ought it to be so on the part of God, when His oath is engaged!

John Owen, *Works*, vol 6, pg 476

**Meditate and Pray:** Father, we each ask for that degree of assurance so that every doubt be silenced and the converting work that saves us be sure! May we, indeed, become like a weaned child with his mother – able to confess that, in our lives, He has indeed done all things well.

Then we will be able to say with the hymn writer, “For I Know, Whate’er Befall me – Jesus doeth all things well!” Amen!