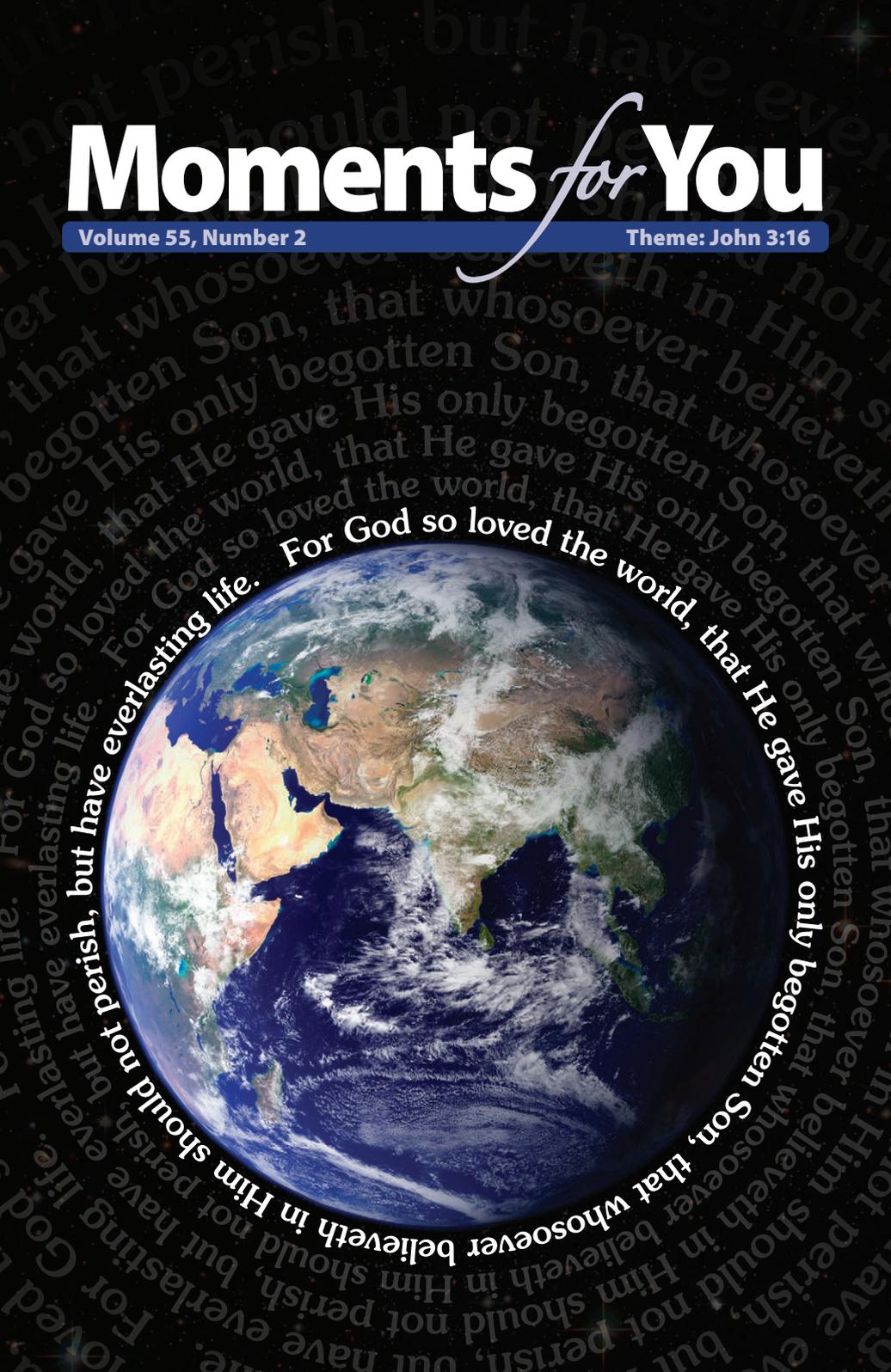


# Moments *for* You

Volume 55, Number 2

Theme: 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.

## IS IT REALLY TRUE?

“God so loved the world.” So says the text, but can we still believe it?

### THE DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE

There are those who find God’s love for the world incompatible with scientific discovery. They say it is impossible to believe John 3:16 in view of the seeming insignificance of our world. In a former day, when this little planet on which we live was thought to be the biggest thing that God had made and the center of the universe, it was easier to believe the message, “God so loved the world.” But the discoveries of our astronomers have shaken up men’s ideas a good deal during the last few generations. Far from this earth being the center of the universe, it is now seen to be an almost infinitesimal speck amid a bewilderingly exhaustless profusion of suns and systems and galaxies.

What a single leaf is to the mighty forests of the Amazon, what a single blade of grass is to the American prairies and the Russian steppes, what a single drop of dew is to a thousand Pacifics, such is the big, little orb on which we live!

### THE THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

In view of this, can it be said that God even notices this world, let alone values it so preeminently as to make it the object of the supreme expression of His love? Indeed, we *can* say that “God so loved the world” with even more fullness of meaning and glory. There is no such thing as “big” or “little” with a God who is infinite. God does not love this world for its *physical size* but for its *moral value*. All that the new scientific discoveries are really doing is giving us a bigger and more

glorious picture of God, and a more profound conception of the wonder of that divine love which expressed itself through the historical facts on which Christianity is built.

### THE VITAL FACT

The vital fact to grasp is this—God does not love this world for its *physical size*, but for its *moral value*. After all, what is a star compared with a soul? Well did the Lord Jesus know the value of one immortal human soul when He asked, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). What does the biggest star mean to an omnipotent God when compared with a soul made in the very image of God Himself—a soul with the capacity for God, for holiness and fellowship and worship and service and love—and with equally real capabilities of sin and shame and agony of suffering?

Our ignorance about many things does not in the slightest degree affect those solid historical facts upon which Christianity is built. It is a fact that God is and that He has revealed Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a solid, glorious fact of history that Jesus came, that He lived, taught, wrought, suffered, died, rose, and ascended to the Father again. Yes, He rose and He lives today—the ever-living, ever-loving, everlasting Saviour of all who receive Him.

The dear old text still shines with the unquenched and unquenchable light of eternal truth—“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” (John 3:16).

—Condensed from *For God So Loved*, copyright © 1995 by J. Sidlow Baxter.

## AN OCEAN IN A DROP

John 3:16 has been called an ocean of thought in a drop of language. I personally owe everything to it, for it was through this verse that my eyes were opened to the love of God and my heart was opened to welcome the Lord Jesus. Eternity alone will tell how many millions have been saved because its majestic words fell into the soil of their hearts, sprang up, and bore fruit.

This gem begins with God and ends with everlasting life. The Son, who is the theme of John's Gospel, is exactly in the center where He belongs. It is the GOSPEL in just a few words. —From *Meditations in John* by August Van Ryn.

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.

## THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

*“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” (John 3:16).*

I suppose that I had read this verse tens of thousands of times, and yet, a little while ago, I sought of the Lord a clearer view of it. After reading these familiar words over, perhaps a hundred times, prayerfully asking for new light and insight, it flashed on my thought that there are *ten words* in the verse that are quite prominent words, such as “God,” “loved,” “world,” “whosoever,” and so on. Further careful study showed these words to be in *five pairs*. Let us look at this text in the light of this fresh arrangement of the thoughts which it contains.

### “GOD” AND “SON”

These are two of the persons of the Godhead. Many are troubled about the relation of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father. They cannot exactly see how Jesus Christ can be equal with God if He is God's Son. They cannot see how He can be

as glorious as the Father, and how He can be entitled to the same honor and homage and worship as the Father if He proceeds forth from the Father, and comes into the world.

Let us seek a simple illustration. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” What is a word? It is the expression of a thought. A thought in a mind is not visible, but when it takes the form of a word, that thought comes to your eye on the printed page, or to your ear through the voice of the speaker. The thought is the word *invisible*; the word is the thought *visible*. Now Jesus Christ was the invisible thought of God put into a form in which you could see and hear it.

A great many people have the notion that God the Father is all wrath, and that Jesus Christ, who incarnates the principle of love, comes in between the angry God and the sinner. That is a very shallow notion indeed. Have you never gotten hold of the truth that the Father is just as much interested in you as the Son is, and that the Father loves you just as

much as the Son does? Look at our verse. It puts all the glory of the love and the sacrifice upon the Father: "For God so loved ... that He gave." When Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father," Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:8,9).

#### **"LOVED" AND "GAVE"**

The word "love" has different meanings in different cases. I love God because I know Him to be the most beautiful, the most wise, the most glorious, and the most gracious Being in the universe. But why did He love me? Was it because He saw that I was beautiful and truthful, honest and honorable? Not so, says the Bible: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... when we were enemies" (Romans 5:8,10).

So there are two kinds of love. You love a beautiful person with a lovely character because you see something in the person that draws out your love. But that is not the kind of love God has for us. God's love is impartial, universal, self-denying, self-forgetting, voluntary. Now, it is a characteristic of *that* kind of love that it *gives*. Such love keeps nothing, but gives everything that it has. And so these words, "loved" and "gave," naturally go together. You could not have one without the other. There could not be this wonderful giving without this wonderful loving; and there could not be this wonderful loving without this wonderful giving.

#### **"WORLD" AND "WHOSOEVER"**

These are both universal terms. "World" is the word that God uses to indicate the objects of His love. There is always a danger of losing sight of ourselves in a multitude of people,

but when God looks at us, He never forgets each individual. Every one of us stands out just as plainly before the Lord as though we were the only man, woman, or child on earth. So God adds here another word, "whosoever," that is also universal, but with this difference: "whosoever" takes everyone out of the world and holds him up separately before the Lord.

If this precious text only said, "God so loved the world," one might say, "Oh, He never thought of me. He had a kind of a general love to the whole world, but He never thought of me." But when God uses that all-embracing word "whosoever," that *must* mean you and me; for whatever my name or yours may be, it is included in "whosoever," is it not?

#### **"PERISH" AND "EVERLASTING LIFE"**

In the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest [of the forbidden fruit] thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). It did not mean that Adam should that day die *physically*. It meant something worse than that. He *died to God* when he ate. One proof that Adam and Eve died to God when they ate the forbidden fruit

*The hymn writer and preacher Wendell P. Loveless used to say, "When I was first a Christian, I often wished that my name was in John 3:16 rather than the word "whosoever." However, one summer I was traveling down south and came upon a shop owned by another Wendell P. Loveless. I realized then that if my name had appeared in the Bible it might have meant him and not me, but the word "whosoever" included us both!*

is that, when the Lord came down to walk in the garden as their companion, our first parents shrank from the presence of the Lord and hid.

How do you know that you are dead to God? You want to get out of His way. You do not love the things that God loves; you would like to be independent of God's rule. You would like, if possible, to get into some corner of the universe where there is no God. The Psalmist twice says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). The impious man hates God. It is an uncomfortable thing for him to think that there is a Sovereign of the earth who will judge all the works done in the body. When one is unprepared to go into that judgment and meet the Judge, it is uncomfortable to think of the judgment day that lies beyond the grave.

After the prodigal son went into the far country, and had wasted his life and possessions, he came to himself. He came back to his father and said, "Father, I have sinned." The father rejoiced, because his son "was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32). Now, let us once more hear the word of the living God. God so loved you that He gave the best that He had to give, and all that He had to give. While He gave to the whole world, He singled you out as the object of His love, and said, "whosoever." God says, "Come back to Me, My prodigal and wandering child."

How long would it take to change from death unto life? Just as long, and no longer, as it takes to turn around. Your back has been on God. When you turn, your face will be toward Him. It will take no longer for a sinner to become a living son of God than that. Just put your heart into your acceptance of Jesus. Cast your

whole will into the acceptance of the Son of God, renounce your sin and your rebellion, and take the salvation that is given to you.

### "BELIEVE" AND "HAVE"

*Believing* is receiving. This word occurs forty-four times in the gospel according to John, which is the great gospel of "believing." It is constantly repeating believing, believing, believing, and having life. In the twelfth verse of the first chapter, we read: "As many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that *believe* on His name." That little word "even" indicates that to believe is equivalent to receive. You may, in any one of those forty-four instances in this gospel, put the word "receive" in the place of the word "believe" and still make good sense.

You *have* what you *take*, do you not? It is a very simple thing to take what is given to you, and so to have it. That is practically all there is in faith. We may make faith sound complicated by talking too much about it, leading others to infer that there is some obscurity or mystery in it. Faith is very simple: it is taking God at His word. Just as you can put forth your hand and receive a gift, you are able to put forth your will and receive the gift of God, even Jesus Christ, as your Saviour.

The Lord Jesus Christ says to you, "I love you; I died for you. Do you believe? Will you receive the salvation that I bought for you with My own blood?" You need to do no work; all that you need to do is with all your heart to believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again. Trust God at His word and take this salvation which He offers to you.

—Adapted from *The Heart of the Gospel* by A.T. Pierson.

## "MUST BE LIFTED UP"

*"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15).*

### THE TWO "MUSTS"

This is the second "must" in the third chapter of this Gospel. If man "must be born again" (v. 7) in order to see and enter the kingdom of God, the Son of Man *must* be lifted up so that man, dead in trespasses and sin, may receive eternal life and not perish. What our Lord means by "the Son of Man must be lifted up" is His impending crucifixion. The twelfth chapter makes this plain: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. *This He said, signifying what death He should die*" (John 12:32,33).

### THE OLD TESTAMENT EVENT

The incident in the wilderness, when Moses lifted up the serpent, is found in Numbers 21:4-9. God had sent fiery serpents into the camp of Israel as a judgment. The bite of these serpents was deadly. But when the people cried, "We have sinned," God graciously provided the remedy. He told Moses to make a serpent of brass and set it upon a pole, with the assuring promise that every one who was bitten and looked upon the brazen serpent would live. Moses made the serpent, put it upon the pole, and whenever an Israelite was bitten, and he looked, he lived.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATION

The use of this incident to illustrate the wonderful truth of redemption manifests the heavenly wisdom of our Lord. It also confirms that Old Testament events contain lessons for us today: "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and

they are written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11). The condition of the camp of Israel is a picture of the ravages of sin, and of the wages of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23). The brazen serpent lifted up on a pole is the type (or picture) of Christ in His sacrificial work on the cross.

### SIMILAR, BUT DIFFERENT

The brazen serpent was the very image of what was destroying the Israelites, but it had no poisonous fangs. Though it bore the likeness of the deadly serpents, it was harmless. Thus the Son of God appeared in the form of man, in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), but He was without sin; He knew no sin. When He was lifted up on the cross, He was made sin for us and by the offering of Himself He put away sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:26).

### COMPLETE VICTORY

Looking up at the brazen serpent, the Israelite saw the very thing which had brought death and ruin upon them triumphed over, and completely conquered. And so, when we look to Christ crucified, made a curse, bearing sin, we see sin judged, condemned, triumphed over, robbed of its power and stripped of its strength.

### THE WAY TO SALVATION

Christ died for the ungodly, and believing on Him means salvation from eternal judgment and the gift of eternal life. What is it to believe? It is the same thing that the Israelites did when in simple faith they accepted God's Word, believed it to be true, and then looked to the brazen serpent on the pole. This simple faith in God's provision is the way to salvation: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

—Condensed from *The Gospel of John* by Arno C. Gaebelein.

## DOES GOD LOVE SINNERS?

One of the earliest stories I ever heard about D. L. Moody, that great evangelist of the nineteenth century, took place when he was temporarily called away to another city and left a young English preacher named Henry Moorhouse to speak during his absence. Upon returning from his trip, he asked his wife, "Well, what about the young preacher?"

"Oh," she said, "he is a better preacher than you are. He is telling sinners that God loves them."

"He is wrong!" said Moody, "God doesn't love sinners."

"Well," she said, "you go and hear him."

"Is he still preaching?" asked Mr. Moody.

"Yes, he has been preaching all week and has only taken up one verse, John 3:16" was her reply.

When Mr. Moody went to the meeting, Moorhouse got up, and said, "I have been hunting and hunting all through the Bible, looking for a text, and I think we will just talk about John 3:16 once more." Mr. Moody always testified that it was on that night that he first got hold of a clear understanding of the gospel and the love of God. Think what it meant in Moody's life, and in the lives of tens of thousands who were reached through his ministry, to know that God loves sinners!

—Adapted.

## GOD SOOOOOO LOVED

Since the beginning of time, men have tried to understand and explain the magnitude of the love of God, but even their efforts seem to fall short. That is the problem with trying to express the inexpressible. Paul, who was one of the greatest exponents of the Christian faith, wrote: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38,39).

However, the small word "so" seems to convey more in a moment than could be expressed in endless lengthy orations. I remember asking a small child how much she loved her father, and, stretching her arms wide, she replied, "Sooooooo much." When John's gospel indicates the scope of God's compassion, it reads, "For God SO loved the world."

One of the greatest attempts to express the love of God was made by Frederick Lehman who lived from 1868 until 1953. He wrote:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment  
made;*

*Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade.*

*To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry;*

*Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

*O love of God, how rich and pure;  
How measureless and strong.*

*It shall forevermore endure,  
The saints' and angels' song.*

—From *Honey From the Rock*, copyright © 1996 by Ivor Powell. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

***We can never really know  
God until we know His love.  
God so loved the world that  
He sent His Son. The world  
did not ask God to send Him,  
men did not ask Christ to  
come, but God loved them,  
and He sent Him. —J.N.D.***

## A DEACON IS SAVED

A man came to my home recently seeking for peace. He was a deacon who had held several church offices, and was well regarded as a fine Christian man in his community. But on this day he had driven over two hundred miles because he heard me give a message which convinced him that he was not saved at all. He told me his story—the story of many misguided and darkened hearts in religious communities everywhere. As a boy, he attended a revival meeting in his church, and through the urging of the Sunday School teacher he and others in his class went forward and united with the church.

He said, “I did this with others, but there was no change in my heart. Nothing happened to me, except that I became more religious and took part in various activities in the church. I have continued in this path until now, when I am fifty-one years old, but there is still no peace in my heart. I often wondered whether anybody could really know if he were saved, and I comforted my heart with the thought that I had as much religion as others, and was living a better life than many other professing Christians.”

He had brought his Bible, and so we opened to John 3:16. I asked him, “Would you like to be saved right now, and know definitely that you are saved?” “Certainly,” he said, “that is just why I came to see you. If salvation is obtainable, I want it.” We read the verse together.

I asked him, “Do you think that eternal life is a present possession, or something that you obtain at the end of life?”

“I suppose it comes at the end, if we deserve it.”

“Read this verse again, and tell me what it says about eternal life.”

He read the verse and said, “It seems to come through believing, and it seems to be given right now. I do believe, but I certainly do not have eternal life. What is the matter?”

I asked, “What do you believe?”

“I believe every word of the Bible. I believe that Jesus is God’s Son and that He is the Saviour.”

“This does not satisfy your heart, does it?”

“No, and it never has.”

I pointed out the difference between believing facts and applying them to one’s own heart. “If Christ is the Saviour, then you may safely trust your soul to Him. He accepts all who come to Him, and applies the saving work of Calvary to those who believe that He did it for them.”

We knelt together, and he prayed: “Lord Jesus, I accept You for myself. I have always believed about You, but now see that it was *my* sins that You were bearing, and I believe that You blotted them out for *me*. I thank You for saving me and forgiving me.”

As he said this, a new joy and peace came into his heart, and he left me with the assurance that he had passed from death unto life.

—From *The Doctor’s Best Love Story* by Walter L. Wilson, M.D.

**For God**, the Lord of earth and Heaven,  
**So loved**, and longed to see forgiven,  
**The world**, in sin and pleasure mad,  
**That He gave** the greatest gift He had,  
**His only begotten Son**, to take our place,  
**That whosoever**, oh, what grace,  
**Believeth**, placing simple trust,  
**In Him**, the Righteous and the Just,  
**Should not perish**, lost in sin,  
**But have everlasting life** in Him.