

# Love

By Hendrik Joubert

When “love” is discussed in a religious context one of the most popular verses focused upon must be **John 3:16: *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.*** It is indeed the most beautiful illustration of love ever, but could it be that this passage is *loved* because of the focus on the love of God expressed towards man, and not the love of man expressed towards God?

An important condition missed – or misunderstood – is the fact that *having eternal life* is contingent upon *faith in Him*. From the statement in **John 12:42-43** it is obvious that believing in Jesus *unto salvation* is not a mere mental exercise, or simply an admission of who He is: ***Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup> for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.***

The statement in **verse 43** makes it obvious that their faith in Jesus was not brought to life by actions that would demonstrate it. In the words of the Lord spoken through James, their faith was ***useless: But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*** **James 2:20** Faith in God, and His Son, is demonstrated by responding to what the Lord tells us to do.

The verse following **John 3:16** is another powerful illustration of the love of God, as well as the resulting grace: ***For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.*** In isolation it may seem that everyone will escape judgment, but the condition for salvation has been stated in **verse 16: ...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life** – and we have already noticed that it cannot be a *dead* faith. The gracious sacrifice has been made for all, but not all would respond by faith in order to receive the grace of God. Notice the purpose of Paul's preaching: ***...we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake. Romans 1:5.*** Obedience to the faith brings it to life, resulting in salvation *by faith*.

The next verse in the context of **John 3 (verse 18)** helps us understand one more fact seemingly missed, or even ignored. Think of this, if the punishment should fit the crime, do you consider yourself bad enough to deserve eternal punishment in hell? How many people would answer *yes* to this? ***We all make mistakes, but we are not really that bad...?*** The fact of the matter is that ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23.*** It therefore is not a matter of not being bad enough to go to hell; no one is good enough to make it to heaven. Jesus did not come to judge us to be sinners. We are that because of our actions. The love of God is demonstrated by the Son coming to save those who would believe in Him: ***He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)***

Notice how our sinfulness is the judgment we brought upon ourselves: ***"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."*** (John 3:19-21)

I do not hate God? Then I should be motivated to seek Him because of His demonstration of love: ***For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)***

I should love Him because he first loved me (**1 John 4:19**), and herein lies the test: ***For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)*** I demonstrate my love towards God by my obedience to His commandments. In face of His demonstration of love, I certainly do not consider that a burden. May we be motivated by His love to love Him in return by seeking Him through faith so He may reward us. (**Hebrews 11:6**)