

The Best Gift Ever

As I prepare for the holidays, it is easy for me to get caught up in the planning, decorating, shopping, gift-giving, and all the other wonderful activities, but lose track of the “reason for the season,” that baby in the manger, who he is, what he accomplished, and what he asks of us today. To hold fast to the true hope, peace, joy, and love this season brings, please look closely with me at a familiar Scripture about the Best Gift Ever.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 JFV

For God: You know who he is; he’s the one who created and is in control of the universe and everything in it (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16-17), who has no beginning and no end (Revelation 1:8), and wants to have a personal relationship with each of us (Jeremiah 31:33, Revelation 3:20).

So loved: God’s love proves itself by action (1 Corinthians 13), steadfast, unchanging; he loved us first, and his love is not dependent on us (Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4-5).

The world: The world is all the people—the good, the bad, and the ugly—that ever were and will be, from Adam and Eve to you and me, and to any generation in the future.

That he gave: As in a gift that was not earned or deserved and is freely available to everyone who will receive it (Ephesians 2:8-9).

His only Son: That’s Jesus! The one who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary in that manger in Bethlehem, who lived a sinless life, even though he was fully human, like you and me.

That whoever believes in him: Believing *in* Jesus is more than acknowledging he existed, more than believing he is God in human form (John 1:1, 14), more than believing that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21), for which we deserve eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). It is even more than believing that the sacrifice of Jesus, God incarnate, is the only adequate payment for our sins (1 John 2:2; John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Believing *in* Jesus is understanding and believing what the Bible says about Jesus *and* trusting and relying on those truths as the basis for salvation (Romans 10:9).

Should not perish but have eternal life: Perish—in this verse—means eternal spiritual death separated from God. Eternal life is eternity spent in a loving relationship with God, which begins as soon as we accept God’s gift of salvation and ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior.

This Christmas, we pray that you accept and cherish the Best Gift Ever!

Paul and Donna Harold

