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BULLETIN BRIEF

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No. 5

A HUG FROM A VIRTUOUS HEART A Near Perfect Cure For What Ails You

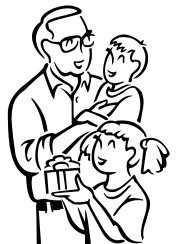
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SUCH HUGS ARE HEALTHY

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Generate goodwill
Elevate self-esteem

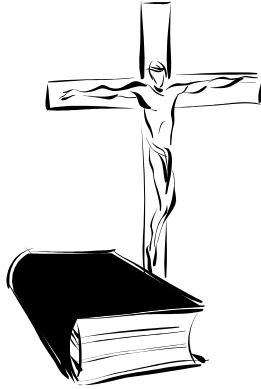
**LITTLE SHORT OF A
WONDER DRUG!**
(cf. Proverbs 17:22)

(Author unknown)



JOHN 3:16

G. K. Wallace



John 3:16 is a universal text. It is used by every preacher in the land. Preachers in all the denominations regard this text as the law and the gospel. They say that it is the message of God in epitome. John 3:16, to the world, is the gospel in its entirety.

Recently there appeared in one of our daily newspapers a statement something like unto this: "John 3:16 is all the Bible that we need. If all the Bible were lost except John 3:16 we would have all the scripture that we need in order to be saved and to

go home to God when we die." Of course the writer believed in salvation by faith alone and the impossibility of apostasy.

It seems strange that the apostle John did not know what this preacher felt that he knew. John wrote twenty-one chapters in his book and put thirty-six verses in the third chapter. It is also strange that the Holy Spirit did not know what this preacher said as he told John what to write. One can readily see that such a claim as made by the preacher referred to is an effort to justify a denominational dogma.

John 3:16 is a wonderful verse and expresses a great truth. However, this passage cannot be used to teach the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. The context will show the truth of what we are saying. Too, be it remembered that when salvation is predicated upon faith and no other condition mentioned, the faith spoken of is the faith of the obedient believer.

John 3:16 pictures the faith of the obedient believer. It shows the faith of the baptized believer. This may be seen by looking at the verses just above it.

There is scarcely a person who is unable to quote John 3:16. Every preacher and almost every member of every denomination can quote the statement as revealed by the Holy Spirit through the great apostle John. However, it is doubtful if any of them can quote verses fourteen and fifteen of John the third chapter. Do we know what these verses say? If not, we do not know what John is saying in John 3:16.

John 3:14-15, says, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life.*" Please note that John says, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent...even so must the Son of man be lifted up.*" Numbers 21 tells us how the serpent was lifted up. All who were healed from the poison of the snake had to be-

lieve and look upon the serpent. They had to believe and obey. The faith that saved those who were bitten by the serpent was an obedient faith. "*And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived*" (Num. 21:9). The faith that saved the man bitten by the serpent was an obedient faith. Even so the Son of man was lifted up. Faith in Christ must always be an obedient faith.

The last verse in John 3 is positive proof that the faith of John 3:16 is an obedient faith. "*He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (Jn. 3:36; ASV). He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life. Thus we see that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys. He who believes, regardless of how sincere he is, cannot be saved unless he also obeys.

One cannot separate John 3:16 from its context and understand what it teaches. The verses just preceding it show that obedience is involved. The last verse in the chapter shows that obedience is involved in John 3:16. John 3:5 must not be ignored while preaching on how to be saved.

If you are inclined to think that faith only is taught in John 3:16, let me ask you a question. Does John 3:16 include the new birth? If it does not, by it you could not be saved. The new birth is essential to salvation. "*Except one be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). Without the new birth one cannot enter the kingdom. If you reply that the faith of John 3:16 includes the new birth then we suggest that it is a faith that includes being baptized. The new birth is surely included in the faith of John 3:16, but the new birth includes being baptized. "*Except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). The new birth is explained by Christ when He said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned*" (Mk. 16:16). It is evident that the faith of John 3:16 is the faith of the baptized believer.

It is no wonder, then, that when a man desires to evade the force of John 3:5 and Mark 16:16 that he wants to take John 3:16 by itself. To take John 3:16 by itself is to take it out of its context and make it teach that which God never intended.

The use that John made of this statement of faith shows that it is a faith that was like the faith the children of Israel had when they were healed from the serpent. John 3:16 is the faith that obeys — "*he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life.*" It is the faith of the baptized believer (John 3:5). This is the use that John made of the faith spoken of in John 3:16; any other use of it is a misuse.

GLEANINGS FROM THE WORKS OF G.K. WALLACE, p. 249, M.L. Forrester, P.O. 723, High Springs, FL 32643, Published first in Centennial *Gospel Advocate* 1955

THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA



What was the true state of the church at Laodicea in spite of their proclamation of wealth and independence? They were, "*wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.*" In other words they were absolutely bankrupt spiritually (3:17). How many wealthy churches in our time are in the exact same state seeing they are bloated on wealth, gorged on social gospel programs, and dwelling in physical plants that would make the Taj Mahal blush, while billions starve for the blessed gospel?

This is question number 115 of 576 in The Lamb/The Lion, a commentary on the book of Revelation, written by Jim E. Waldron. You may have a copy at no charge.

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Don't wait for six strong men to take you to church.

(Heb. 9:27)

God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.

(II Tim. 2:3)

We must not change the message,

The message must change us.

(Gal. 1:6-9)

Forbidden fruits create jams.

(Prov. 6:32; I Cor. 15:13; II Cor. 7:14)

In prayer don't give God instructions,

just report for duty

(Matt. 26:39; Heb. 5:8-9)

The task ahead of us is never greater

than the Power behind us.

(I John 4:4)