Should Not Perish

Perhaps one of the most misread and misapplied passages in the New Testament is found in the Book of John. Jesus states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The preceding quotation comes from the New King James Version (NKJ), which uses the wording "should not perish" just as the King James (KJ) Version does. The following translations offer different wording, which I suggest are incorrect - New International Version (NIV); "shall not perish but have eternal life," New Living Translation (NLT); "will not perish but have eternal life," New American Standard Bible (NASB); "will not perish, but have eternal life."

Some believe that what is said by Jesus in John 3:16 is all they need for salvation. Often, added to their statement, is that John 3:16 mentions nothing about water baptism in order to be saved. Following that mindset, one should rightfully add then that, neither does John 3:16 say anything about repentance of sin or confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Yet, such does not mean that repentance and confession are not necessary for salvation.

Clearly, every word Jesus says in John 3:16 is true. However, not all of the truth regarding salvation is found in this one passage. All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, the Bible, specifically the New Testament is true. To set aside part of what God teaches because we believe such is what one passage teaches indicates that something is awry in what we believe. We must be willing to accept all the Bible teaches on a subject under consideration, not just what is taught in any one passage on the subject. Certainly, this is true of John 3:16, where the

subject of faith in Christ and salvation on the grounds of that faith is the subject. Once we grasp all the Bible teaches on the subject of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, we are then in a position to understand and accept what John 3:16 is teaching.

Whoever believes in Jesus Christ unto eternal life, as John 3:16 teaches, is the one whose faith moves him to obey his Lord in baptism for the remission of his sins and to faithfully serve him as a Christian (Acts 2:38 & 22:16, Revelation 2:10). James declares, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). Belief (faith) is the driver that moves us to submit and obey, doing all that God requires of us for salvation.