

June 2016

Dear neighbours,

"You're absolutely right" we sometimes say. "Absolutely!"

But can we actually be absolutely right about anything? Can we be spot on?

Are not some things right for you, but not for me? And vice versa.

Can we then be absolutely right in religion?

A sportsperson may not worry too much about an outstanding performance on every occasion but will want to win the one that counts. The big one. The qualifier. The championship.

Can we be absolutely sure that we've got it right in the issues of eternity? Is there an eternity? Is there God? Is there in fact one big issue that counts, even if we've got everything else wrong?

Isn't my idea one thing, and somebody else's another and that's OK?

Is there an ultimate authority based on an ultimate reality? Who says so? Whose word goes?

It's something we must all think about, if we are wise.

Christians differ in detail, as Muslims differ in detail, as politicians, even of the same party, differ in the detail of their profession. We are not perfect. But Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the last word, the absolute authority. They are convinced that trust in Him is not misplaced, especially when and where it counts most.

If there is one fact that is certain about life, it is that we all must die. What happens then? Anything?

Jesus said "I am the Resurrection" (John 11.25). He did Himself rise from the dead. He raised Lazarus (John 11). On the cross He spoke to the thief, (Luke 23.43) "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

"To God belong the issues from death" (Psalm 68.20). The full verse reads, "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death." Christians believe that He has appointed the Saviour as the way to Him; and that that way is definitively set out, on the authority of our heavenly Father, in the Bible.

Is there anything better out there than that every believer in Christ shall live, all alive unto God and approved by Him (Luke 20.38)? More instinct with life that we are even now. Not just living on in someone's memory, or commemorated, say, in the name of a football stand. What use is that to Bobby Moore or Bobby Robson personally? Surely to be alive now, and, what is more, to be made perfect would be worth infinitely more than that. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new." (Revelation 21.4-5).

Christians are prepared to trust the ultimate authority of the Fatherhood of the Creator God. And that the Lord Jesus is His authorised only begotten Son. That the Bible is His definitive explanation of the things that are largely unseen. That the Lord's diagnosis of mankind's predicament through sin is spot on. And that the Saviour's death (followed by resurrection) as the Representative of every one who puts trust in Him is the appointed way of making atonement for sin to enable us to come into the presence of a holy God and be kindly received.

Even trust itself, Christians would say, the very fact that there is such a thing, is ultimately designed to answer to the ultimate reality that a personal Father in heaven and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ may be trusted.

“Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4.12) than Jesus Christ. The verse goes on, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Right or wrong? To be implicitly trusted and acted upon or not? Ultimately, is it the only solution for the things that matter most or only relatively acceptable; all right for me but not for you?

It will never be any different. It’s not going to change. It is an ultimate sort of verse.

You and I are on our own here. Some would persuade you to take these things on board and commit your whole life to them with eternity attached. Others would pour scorn on the very idea. Abstention is a “no” vote in this matter.

Jesus drew a picture of this whole procedure for us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). “Enter ye in at the strait (narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7.13-14).

Let every one be fully persuaded in his/her own mind.

“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Philippians 4.8-9). So wrote Paul.

His words entreat us to lift ourselves into a world of goodness and an unseen world of peace in our hearts.

The glorious subject of our worship on Sundays is the Lord Jesus Christ and our approach is to the Father by Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit. You are welcome, and we mean welcome, to join us for worship at 10.45am and 2pm on Sundays.

Yours affectionately,