

Friston Baptist Church

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To our neighbours near the church in Friston village and our neighbours near where we individually live.

Dear neighbours,

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

So runs what is probably the most famous and best loved verse in the whole Bible. It comes from the Gospel according to John, chapter 3 and verse 16.

It tells us that, whatever we may make of the state of the world, God loves it.

It is not just that He loves it so much, though He does. But this verse tells us of quality rather than quantity.

He loves the world in such a way, that He sent His Son into this world from heaven and did not spare Him but gave Him up for all sorts and conditions of people, to redeem them.

It was, and is, a rescue mission. Whosoever believes in Jesus Christ from our world shall have everlasting life. We were all perishing but Christ’s gospel (good news) is one of forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

But why is this necessary and how is that salvation achieved, which carries the promise that the perishing shall have everlasting life?

It presupposes that we come to the point of believing that God created us in His own image. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11.6). “In his image” means possessing the spiritual qualities of a soul which animals don’t have. They can therefore please Him just by being what they are; human beings can only please Him by the exercise of faith, which, in turn, is a soul exercise.

Of believing also that our first father (Adam – with Eve) was disobedient to God and “fell” from grace. In consequence the ground was cursed, childbearing became dangerous yet most desirable (“thy desire shall be to thy husband” Genesis 3.16) and Satan was constituted an implacable enemy.

In consequence we inherit in our DNA the rebellion which Adam had in his heart and which issued in his disobedience. Environment serves merely to shape our heredity as, for example, alcohol serves only to exacerbate latent susceptibilities, not create them.

“All have sinned” (Romans 3.23). There is no exception. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3.10).

We come, then, to the point of recognising our sinful nature, and its many ways of expressing itself. All this we have in Adam, passed on in our DNA. “In Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15.22). More than this, we come to the point of seeing the detestableness of our sin to others, to ourselves and, most of all, to God. What the Bible calls sin showing itself to be “exceeding sinful” (Romans 7.13).

Despite this condition of a fallen world and fallen humanity God loves it and us. So He sent His Son into the world to be not only fully God but also fully man. Not in great dignity, but in humility; born in a stable, with nowhere to lay His head on a regular basis during His 3-year ministry. Born to suffer and die.

All this, to make atonement for the sins of those who believe in Him.

This atonement is by substitution. The real transaction of the cross was not an unfair death for upsetting the status quo of the time but a deliberately planned death. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (Isaiah 53.10). In His total innocence and perfection, being without sin, He paid the punishment for every sin of every believer who repents, confesses his sin and seeks pardon from a holy God.

Such persons are now no longer in Adam but in Christ. They are born again by the Spirit. They are new creatures. And what has happened within will sooner, rather than later, become apparent to those who see them. For the Saviour's life is in them.

Belief is not simply intellectual. It is the heartfelt total reliance of one who wishes above all to be done with sin upon the merits of the death of the Saviour.

Not that we become instantly perfect. "I have seen an end of all perfection" Psalm 119.96. But in Christ we are made perfect, because His new nature is imputed in place of our old one. God sees a believer as being in Christ and His holiness is immediately appeased; that person becomes acceptable to a holy God; a sinner saved by grace.

The Bible uses picture language to portray our state in Adam in the sight of God, namely that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64.6). Spiritually, we are as urchins whose clothes do not cover the body – our best works are so defiled and tattered they fail to cover the sins of our souls. But Christ's righteous perfection is wrapped around the believer's soul, an atonement for sin having been accomplished. So a believer is in Christ.

This is the way God not merely demonstrates His love, but actually loves the individual.

Final victory over sin is achieved in principle and will actually be so permanently in heaven's glory. Christ has been raised from the dead to die no more and has the ultimate power of raising from the dead all who trust in Him.

Though this is but the briefest and most condensed of explanations, this is the why and how of God's promise that He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Our invitation to you always stands, to attend our services on Sunday at 1045hrs and 1400hrs and on Tuesday at 1930hrs. You will find much of interest, to download if you like, on our website. The address is above.

Yours sincerely,