

WEEKLY SERMON

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Love and Life for Eternity

About 30 years ago, as a nominal Christian, I heard a Christian teacher say that if he could only have one verse from the Bible it would be from *John chapter 3, verse 16*.

You may be familiar with the verse even if you don't go to church regularly: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

I agreed with the teacher's choice, but I must admit I also like 3:17 telling me that He didn't send Christ to condemn the world but to save the world through Him.

Now, all this is great in theory but surely there must be more to it after all Jesus gave his life to take the punishment for my sins?

Coming from an age when you didn't get owt for nowt, what payment was expected from me for his forgiveness?

So, like many new Christians, I looked for a way to repay God for His generosity and justify myself by doing good things to repay Him.

If I'm honest I failed miserably!

The words 'justification by faith' were frequently mentioned but I just couldn't believe I'd ever be good enough to deserve the eternal life on offer without paying a price for it.

A few years later God grabbed me and told me to get serious, which I did, but I still doubted that my sins are atoned for without any payment from me.

Then, much later, when talking to new Christian friends in the informal setting of a house group and looking at justification by faith, we came on a verse that helped us.

The verse was from *Hebrews 10:14*: *"...because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy."*

Then in *Hebrews 10:17-18* he adds: *"Their sinful and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."*

We realised that in verse 14, we've been made perfect for ever. Our sins are forgiven, the final sacrifice has been made and God doesn't look on us or judge us as sinners.

At the same time, we're 'being made holy'.

But how?

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

By becoming set apart for Jesus in the way we think and act. God's law is now written on our hearts (verse 16) and we serve Him out of love not guilt.

The truth had dawned, we are to love and serve God because He loves and has forgiven us and not to try and gain His love and forgiveness.

It also occurred to us that on the estate where we meet there are lots of good people doing good things but, sadly, they are not saved because we read in *John 3:16* "*whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*"

These people are to be commended for their good works but need to know and accept Jesus as their saviour to enjoy the promised eternal life. We recognised that it's our job to get that message out to them and there lies another story.

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