

## 155 *Changing our minds IX – The bad news*

I know I tend to analyse everything, but why do I still feel so excited about my faith – as excited as when I came to faith 55 years ago, and again in 1985, when I re-found God’s love for me?

Four years ago, having moved house we went to a new church. We both felt immediately at home. Why? We were made so welcome – and everyone we spoke to said the same; it’s just such a welcoming community. But the other thing we noticed was that it consisted of people from a really wide range of churchmanships. Interesting, eh?!

I’ve “worked on” my faith these past four years, challenging myself to think **why** I believed things, and looking at Scripture but refusing to just accept what I’d always been taught.

I still base my beliefs on the Bible, but the way I interpret the Scriptures has changed. Some might say that I’ve gone too far, but I’ve learned from St Ed’s that you don’t have to believe exactly the same things in order to love each other and work together to build God’s kingdom.

The other thing I’ve wrestled with is how the blazes have Christians, through the centuries, done so much harm to other people, both believers and non-believers? So here I start with the bad news, and the next article will be the good news.

What did the man Christ Jesus spend most time battling against? He was trying to teach people how to live in love with God and with one another, but he was bombarded (and eventually killed) by those whose main preoccupation (with the best of motives!) was religion. Here’s a summary from a late 2018 article<sup>[12]</sup> of the alternative that Jesus was offering:

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Relationship</b>
fear	love / worship
shame	restoration / adoption
estrangement	reconciliation
isolation	community / communion
rejection	acceptance
worthlessness	supreme value
punishment	(repeated) forgiveness
exact meaning (‘letter’)	spirit
doing	being
speaking	listening
obedience	faithful questioning
wrath	grace
word	spirit
knowing right and wrong	enemy love

Then, from an article of mid 2019<sup>[72]</sup> an illustration of how we misinterpret Scripture by applying it to the wrong audience. We think that if it’s a scriptural truth, it must apply to everyone. No! We don’t apply psychological truths (however true they are) to a naughty three-year-old! Watch how we can misuse God’s word by applying it to an inappropriate group:

<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Spoken to</b>	<b>About</b>	<b>We apply to</b>	<b>To say</b>
Romans 6:23 (the wages of sin)	believers	life in Jesus	non-believers	“Repent or perish!”
Romans 1 (wrath of God revealed against sin) <sup>[8]</sup>	believers	“Don’t you dare judge other people! Rom 2:1” <sup>[8]</sup>	non-believers	“You deserve to be punished for your sin”
Jn 14:6 (the way, the truth and the life)	Jesus’ closest disciples	how to get closer to the Father	non-believers	“Jesus is the only way to be saved”

Next, I’ll mention some specific ways my own interpretation has changed – for the better, hopefully.

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