Holy Habits: Biblical Teaching – Week 4

3: 16 is probably the most important combination of numbers in the New Testament.  In chapter 3 verse 16 of his Gospel, John gives us the best possible description of the extent of God’s love for the people He made in His own image: *For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.*(The next verse is very important, too, as it explains what Jesus did on the Cross: *For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour*)*.* If you only know one verse of the Bible off by heart, John 3: 16 would be a very good verse to choose.  In chapter 3 verse 16 of his first letter, John applies his teaching about God’s love to us: *This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others!* If you only want one verse of the Bible to follow, 1 John 3: 16 would be a very good verse to choose.

In 1 Corinthians 3: 16, Paul describes in his usual forthright way the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit: *Surely you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you!* This is theculmination of several other 3: 16s!  Matthew writes in chapter 3 verse 16: *As soon as Jesus was baptised, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him.* Luke speaks about John the Baptist in chapter 3 verse 16 of his gospel and says: *So John said to all of them, “I baptise you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am.  I am not good enough even to untie his sandals.  He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”.* Paul can therefore write to the Ephesians: *I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves (3: 16).* In his 1st letter to the Corinthians quoted above, Paul thinks they should have got the message.  Have we?

Last week we saw how the writers of the New Testament were at pains to stress how reliable their writings were.  It is because of this that we can have confidence in what Paul writes to Timothy: *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living (2 Timothy 3:16).* I believe we would do very well to heed the message of this particular 3: 16.  Just as the first believers *devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2: 42, NIV)*, we must be equally devoted to studying the written accounts of their words that we find in the New Testament, so that we will know the truth and live as Christ wants.

We finish with a blessing: *May the Lord himself, who is our source of peace, give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all (2 Thessalonians 3: 16).*

*Produced by Glenn Evans on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  All quotations from the Good News Translation unless otherwise stated.  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*