

Grace & Truth

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”

Magazine
of
North Uist & Grimsay
Free Church of Scotland
(Continuing)

Vol. 1 No. 2

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Minister's Message: O Taste and See!

Whatever our lot is in this life it must be said that we do not get what we deserve. This is true firstly for the ungodly man. Although he may know suffering and sorrow here yet his experience is nothing compared to what awaits him. He deserves the wrath of a holy and righteous God on account of his sin and this he will undoubtedly receive in full measure in the life to come.

It is also true for the believing man. He too ought to be visited for his transgressions. Instead he enjoys the favour of God to his soul – in part now and in perfection when he enters glory. This is a continual wonder to him – that the Lord has delivered his soul from the lowest hell and set him with the princes of His people.

A Christian is someone who has been quickened together with Christ (Eph.2:5). He once had no relish for the things of God. He walked after his own ways, the ways of darkness and death, enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. His friends were men of the world. When in the house of God, as he sometimes was, his thoughts were, “Behold, what a weariness is it!” (Mal.1:13). Surely there is nothing for me here!

Despite the earthly comforts, despite the jovial companions, despite everything, there was no real peace or contentment in his soul. Instead there was an emptiness within. This would not be acknowledged to others but it could not be denied to himself. He hoped that one day such feelings would be gone. But he also feared that one day his life would be weighed in the balances of righteousness and found wanting.

It was the Lord in His great kindness who showed him his problem: separation from God on account of personal sin. This truth (which he knew already but suppressed) was brought home powerfully to his conscience by the Holy Spirit. The Bible came to life and spoke to him. Its message felt sharper than a twoedged sword, for it judged his very thoughts and desires (Heb.4:12). God hedged up his way with thorns and made a wall in front of him (Hos.2:6). He was convinced of his sin. He knew he was guilty and hell-deserving! Where could he turn for help?

Through the preaching of the gospel he came to learn that whereas he had transgressed God's law Jesus Christ the sinless Son of God is “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom.10:4). He turned from his sins and trusted in the Saviour. He was justified freely by the grace of God and adopted into the Lord's family.

Having “tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1Pet.2:3) the Christian's appetite for God grows. By faith he feeds on Christ in the Scriptures,

for Christ is “the bread of life” (John 6:35) and the only food for his soul. As he trusts and obeys and delights himself in God the believer is privileged to see “the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psa.27:13). God has purposed everlasting salvation for His people and in His providence He works every part of their experience to that glorious end. This is their portion and they would not exchange it for anything in this world.

David, the man after God’s own heart, knew this abundant life. He said: “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psa.34:8). Have you made this great discovery? □

Helps to Devotion (Rev. James Smith)

CLEANSING. *“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”* (Matthew 8:2)

This was the prayer of a poor leper. He had heard of Jesus; he had faith in his power; but as he had neither an invitation to come to him nor a promise from him, he could not feel sure of his willingness to help him. He came, therefore, at a peradventure, and proved, for his own comfort and ours, that Jesus is not only able to deliver, but as willing as he is able. Like the poor leper, we need a miracle of mercy to be wrought for us; not on the body, but on the soul. The leprosy of the body, blessed be God, we have not; but we have the leprosy of the soul. Not only does sin dwell within us, but it works, influences, and defiles us. It not only pollutes our natures, but it pollutes all we do or say. Every prayer we offer, every duty we perform, is stained and dyed with sin. Lord Jesus, it is thine to make the leper clean. Thou didst cleanse many lepers when thou wast here on earth, and give them health of body; cleanse, O cleanse my soul. “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” O cleanse my conscience by the sprinkling of thy most precious blood! Purify my affections by the operations of thy most blessed Spirit! Sanctify my entire nature through the application of thy gracious Word. Cleanse my thoughts, my motives, my words, and all my actions. Wash my inmost soul; for thou knowest I desire to be inwardly, outwardly, and eternally holy! Jesus, Saviour, is not holiness thy delight; dost thou not require truth in the inward parts; and hast thou not promised the sanctifying Spirit? Condescend, then, I beseech thee, to wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; make me like thyself, that I may be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. □

Parables of Jesus: 2. *The House built upon a Rock*

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” (Matthew 7:24-27)

What makes a good building? Is it the size – the number of storeys, perhaps? Is it the materials employed – expensive stone, metal or glass? Or is it the style – whether it is classical or modern? In fact it is none of these things! Many eye-catching structures have come tumbling down when buffeted by storms or shaken by an earthquake. Nothing has been left but useless rubble.

Jesus taught this parable about two builders and two buildings as He finished His great Sermon on the Mount. It illustrates how different sinners receive the word of God and shows us the consequences. It warns us to take heed and to be careful how we hear the gospel.

Similarity

The building of a house in the parable represents a man’s life preparing for eternity, and not any man but one privileged to be under the gospel. The two men put up similar houses, each fine to look at from the outside. Even inside many of the furnishings *appeared* identical.

The lives of those in the church who profess conversion *seem* equally respectable and good. There is worship, service and even a zeal for God. And all say they have a high regard for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Storms

Like every structure these houses were exposed to the extremes of weather: heavy rain, swelling floods and fierce winds. For a time all seemed well but suddenly, a great surprise, one house crashed violently to the ground.

There are many storms which beat against us in this life. Some come upon all – poverty, sickness, bereavement and war; others come upon us because we belong to Christ – reviling and persecution. By these our faith is tried. Is it genuine? Do we stand? And there is the great

trial at the end of time, when all shall be judged and when the storm of God's wrath will break upon the heads of unpardoned sinners, even on many who thought they were safe.

Difference

The difference between the houses was not apparent on the outside or even on the inside, as far as man could see. It was *underneath*. One was built upon a rock; it stood. The other was built upon the sand; it fell. When explained it is so obvious! How foolish to put up a house on such an unreliable foundation!

But look closely at your own life, the one you are building day by day. What is *your* foundation? Is it Christ and His righteousness alone? Or is it your own worth, your own works?

Obedience

It is good to hear the gospel, but what are we *doing* with it? Have we obeyed it? We must repent of our sins, believe in Christ and follow Him. Crucified for sins He is the Rock of salvation, and true faith so unites us to Him that we cannot fall. Sincere obedience to His words is the evidence of genuine conversion. □

Sermon: *The Gospel* (Rev. William Romaine)

“And Jesus said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” – Mark 16:15

This charge was given by our Lord to his apostles; it contains his royal commission, in which he appoints them their work, and promises to be with them in the performance of it—“Lo, I am with you always,” says he, “even to the end of the world.”

He did not confine this charge to them or to the apostolic age; but he includes all his ministers, who have the same commission, the same work, and the promise of the same assistance, which the apostles had. It is their bounden duty, wherever they are sent, to preach the gospel to every creature. This is enjoined them by their Lord and Master, and he will not dispense with their neglect of it. This is their principal business, on which the salvation of the people committed to their care entirely depends; and it is the chief instrument in the hand of God of making their business successful. He owns his preached gospel, and sets his seal to it. To this day

he makes it effectual for all saving purposes. It is still, and will be to the end of the world, the power of God unto salvation.

Since this is the nature of the gospel, men, brethren, and fathers, it behoves you to consider whether you believe its doctrines, and whether you enjoy its blessings. It is your duty to examine yourselves how you receive the good news. If the gospel be not to you the wisdom of God, and the power of God, on whom will you lay the blame? Will you arraign the Judge of all the earth? Weigh this matter well. The time draws near; it is but a very little while before we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. What plea will avail you there? The law cannot acquit you, you have broken it; and therefore upon the footing of the law you will be found guilty before God. No flesh shall be justified by the law, but every mouth shall be stopped.

Will you plead the mercy and grace of the gospel? You must plead it now, or it will not profit you then. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. A matter of infinite consequence to us all.

What stops the free course of the gospel? The world oppose it because it opposes them; it testifies of it that its pursuits are evil; it testifies against unawakened careless sinners, who know not their state; against infidels, an evil heart of unbelief; against legalists, who mix law and gospel. It comes with comfort to distressed minds. Let their distress be what it will, the gospel has good news for them—a remedy for every disease.

But God hath not left himself without a witness. Many believe the gospel, embrace its doctrines, enjoy its blessings; it saves them from every misery for eternity; brings all good in time; all wants supplied; brings everlasting good, an everlasting gospel, true in eternity. Such will it be in all its promises that be enjoyed in their full accomplishment.

The word gospel signifies good news: this is its settled meaning. It brings good news from heaven, a message of good from the justly offended God, declaring his purposes of grace and mercy to his sinful creatures. The gospel is for them; it is not revealed for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners. To them is the word of this salvation sent; it comes after they have broken the holy law, and are liable to its threatened penalties; discovering how the law may be magnified and made infinitely honourable, and God may be eternally glorified in saving them from the punishment due to their sins. This is good news indeed, because they could not undo the sin committed—that is impossible; neither could they make any satisfaction for it: sorrow, tears, good resolutions, future amendment, are no reasons why the law should not take its course, and the convicts of the law suffer for their crimes. The law of God insists upon perfect and continual obedience; it has made no provision for mercy,

may it knows nothing of showing any mercy to transgressors, but in case of the least failure, its sanctions immediately take place, and under them the sinner is left without help and without hope. When he is thoroughly sensible of this, he would sink into black despair, and would go in the bitterness of his soul, mourning all the way to the grave, if the gospel did not discover to him the gracious method of saving sinners, consistent with the honour of the divine law and justice, and conducive to the fullest display of the divine perfections in their everlasting glory.

This is the true character of the gospel; it is a message of good news from God himself, revealing his grace and mercy to sinners. And since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, why is not the gospel alike welcome to all sinners? The reason is plain: the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The gospel is a sovereign remedy, but none take it till they are sensible they want it. It relates the same good news to all, but convinced sinners only are willing to receive it. As soon as they see the exceeding holiness of the law, and the exceeding sinfulness of breaking it, and feel their guilt, and have some foretaste of their punishment; then they begin to relish the gospel. And as they are enabled to mix faith with it, it becomes as suitable to their case as pardon to a condemned malefactor, and as delightful as ease is after long and racking pain, because it brings relief to their guilty consciences, and comfort to their afflicted hearts; and so far as it gains credit, it affords a present deliverance from every malady and misery of sin.

But from whence has the gospel this sovereign efficacy? What truth does it make manifest, by the belief of which sin, with all its sad consequences, may be done away? It reveals the great council of heaven concerning the incarnate Jehovah, and is from thence called the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—good news of a Saviour, whose name was to be called Wonderful—a Child born, and a Son given; and yet this Child, this Son, the everlasting Father, Jehovah manifest in the flesh, God and man in one Christ, Immanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us. This great design was formed in the councils of the Godhead from eternity; and all the divine works in nature and grace were to bring about this wonderful event, with its happy consequences, in earth and heaven. God manifest in the flesh affords the richest display of the glories of the ever-blessed Trinity. Herein is love—the love of the Father shines out in none of his gifts, as it does in the unspeakable gift on his co-equal Son. Behold, what manner of love the Son hath bestowed upon us—angels will admire, and the redeemed will adore for ever him, who humbled himself to be made man, and to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, for the

salvation of his people. Here is grace, as infinitely divine as its author, that the Lord, the Spirit would act upon and influence the minds of sinners to believe in the Son of God, and through him to enjoy the love of the Father. These are the covenant offices of the eternal Three, and they altogether lead to, and centre in, the incarnation of Jehovah; for in the Godhead there are three Persons of co-equal and co-eternal majesty, Father, Son, and Spirit. These Three, as we are taught by the Christian verity, entered into covenant for the manifestation of their divine perfections, and contrive to get an everlasting revenue of honour and praise to themselves in the way of saving sinners. The Son of God covenanted to become their surety to the Father, to take their flesh, and in their nature, and in their stead, to keep the law in his life, to suffer the penalties of it in his cross and passion, and thereby to work out for them a perfect righteousness, and to make a full atonement. And being God over all, blessed for ever, Jehovah himself, there was in his life and death all the virtue and sufficiency to save, which the Godhead could possibly communicate. His work of salvation far exceeds his work of creation. It is so absolutely and infinitely complete, that nothing can be added to it; yea, when all his other works, worthy as they are of their divine author, shall come to an end, then this greatest and best work of God shall receive fresh honour, and an innumerable company of his redeemed creatures shall enjoy its increasing glories for evermore.

The gospel then is the welcome message of good news to convinced sinners—the best news that ever came from heaven. It brings good tidings of great joy, that there is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord Jehovah, and that he has made full reconciliation for iniquity, and has brought in everlasting righteousness. The gospel invites them to come and to partake of its blessings freely; and when they are made to believe the report, the arm of the Lord being revealed unto them, then these happy fruits of the Holy Spirit are found and enjoyed, sweet peace enters into the conscience, and holy love is shed abroad in the heart—peace and love, which surpass all understanding: for blessed is the people, so saith a voice from heaven, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound of the gospel: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16.

This is the lovely character of the gospel of God. And is this your idea of it? Consider, sirs, and examine closely. A mistake herein is of infinite consequence; If your sentiments be different from the standard of truth, you can neither know nor enjoy true happiness: for there is none to be found in earth or in heaven, but what the gospel brings. It is the only message of good news to sinners—a message from the Lord God—glad

tidings of good to convinced sinners. The gospel reveals to them every thing that can bring relief to their guilty consciences, and joy to their afflicted hearts; it discovers to them a perfect deliverance from all sin and misery, by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and a clear title to all grace and to all glory, through the righteousness of the incarnate Jehovah. And when this is believed by the power of the Holy Ghost, then the gospel proves to be a reality—the message of good news is found to be true, and the good things heard of it by report are received and enjoyed. The believer enters upon present possession of gospel blessings, as the sure earnest and happy foretaste of its eternal blessings.

Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that the gospel of the grace of God is not only a truth to be believed, but also a good to be enjoyed; and this is what our Lord charged his apostles to preach. Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, his doctrine must be declared, and his gospel proclaimed. This is the indispensable duty of all the Lord's ministers. Woe be unto you, if you preach not the gospel. Whatever reception they meet with, still they must persist. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel. To preach is to proclaim it, after the manner of heralds, with authority, openly and plainly. However unlikely the means may seem to accomplish the greatest end, yet the means must be used. The gospel must be preached; because it is the instrument in the hand of God for carrying on the whole work of salvation. He has appointed it, and he works in it, and by it. The more weak and unfit it is of itself, the more does the excellency of the power of God therein appear. His glory is displayed by the wonderful effects which he brings about by the preached gospel: for it is said to be the ministration of the Spirit, by which the Holy Spirit is administered and acts. It is also the ministration of righteousness, by which the righteousness of God-Jesus is made known and believed in. By the word of God, his children are said to be born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible: and this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you. The gospel is made the means of their new life, and also of their growth in it, and therefore they are exhorted, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. These great things are spoken of it, and they are true. It is a matter of fact, that the gospel is effectual for all saving purposes. God makes his promise good to this very day—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,"—with ministers to assist them in preaching the gospel, and with their people to bless them in hearing it. He is with them both, that it may prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. He is with them, and always. He never leaves nor forsakes his servants, in any part of their work. He is with

us at this time. His all-seeing eye is upon us. His wisdom is managing for the best. Oh that his saving power may be here manifest: for his presence gives life, and puts spirit into the gospel. What men speak to the outward ears, he sends with his divine efficacy to the heart; there producing what moral persuasion, and fine oratory, and close reasoning attempt in vain. The word spoken, when clothed with his power, becomes mighty to turn sinners from darkness to light. When the great Commander spake—"Let there be light," there was light: so is his word almighty in his spiritual kingdom. Whenever he commands the light to shine out of darkness, he speaks, and it is done; his power is always present to make his word effectual, and will be present with it to the end of the world. For these reasons the gospel must be preached, and why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should bring about the greatest effects by such an instrument? What! is any thing too hard for God? Or any means unfit which he pleases to make use of? He has appointed the gospel to be his great instrument in bringing sinners to himself—to this he has promised his blessing, and to nothing else. The means may appear unlikely to answer the end, but his presence in the means can do all things, and when he pleases to work by a single word, who can let him? Consider, sirs, this is no new thing with God! The creation was produced by a word: he spake, and it was made. View the beautiful order in which he carries on the works of nature; this is also the effect of a word. He commanded, and they stand fast. He upholdeth them by the word of his power; and by his word will he dissolve them. The great day is at hand, when the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, *i. e.* with a commanding voice, at which the whole creation shall pass away, and the place of it shall be found no more. You see God does all things with a word. And as man fell by not believing the word of God, is there not a manifest reason why he should be restored in the way of believing? By not believing the word of God, he sinned, by believing the word of God, he is saved. Who does not see a consistency and harmony in this way of our recovery—a perfect sameness in the divine manner of working? And who cannot discover how the glory of God, which is the end of all his works, is hereby entirely secured to himself? For what have ministers, or people, left to glory in? Whatever riches of gospel-grace God gives to his ministers, or communicates by their means, yet they have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of them. And whatever blessings the people receive by the preached gospel, they are all the free gifts of God, through Jesus Christ. That according as it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory only in the Lord."

But it may be asked, has the gospel the same efficacy? Are the same means accompanied with the same success? They are. The command in the text is still in force: the promise of it is the same: the gospel is still mighty through God, and therefore ministers are required in the text to preach the gospel in all countries, and to all sorts of people—Go ye into ALL the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Go into all lands, whether you find the natives Jews or Gentiles, civilized or savage, all having sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being in the same state of guilt and misery; proclaim to them the good news of gospel grace, and inform them of the divine remedy provided for their distress: fear neither for yourselves, nor for the success of your message—I will be present with you—I will make the gospel welcome to as many as I have ordained unto eternal life—they shall believe it, and by believing, shall find it the power of God unto their salvation.

The apostles obeyed the command of their Lord, and went in person into all the world, into every country then inhabited, and there they preached the gospel. St. Paul asks, Have they not heard? Have not all people heard the preachers? He answers, yes, verily, they have; their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world. They went, like the sun, to communicate everywhere light and life, and comfort and fruitfulness; and the Lord was with them of a truth. Sinners did hear in all lands. Multitudes received repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Still the Lord's hand is not shortened. Whenever he calls and sends his ministers, he gives them the same charge as he did the apostles, and the same promise. They are to preach the gospel to every creature, without distinction—to rich and poor—to magistrates and people—to men of letters—to the unlearned—to sinners of every age and sex;—they all stand in the same need of the gospel, and to every one of them is it to be made known. It matters not, what prejudices or what enmity they may have against it; the truth as it is in Jesus must be preached unto them; because it is God's ordinance to correct their errors, it is God's great instrument to save them from their guilt and misery, there being no other name under heaven given among men, whereby any one can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.

The gospel then is to be preached everywhere, and to every creature, which makes it really good news; for the more extensive it is, certainly the more to be valued. It calls in general to sinners, and excepts none. It invites them to partake of a free salvation, and, what is better, of a full salvation.

Free for sinners as sinners—a free gift of free grace from first to last: it is not for any working or merit of theirs, but entirely through the obedience of the life, and through the atonement of the death of the Son of God, that any sinners are saved. The gospel calls them to come and trust in the finished work of God-Jesus, and to come just as they are, without any previous qualification or condition. Salvation being freely by grace through what the Saviour did and suffered, none are excluded, who come to him. It is an act of grace, without limitation and without exception. Any one who is made willing may take the benefit of it. A debtor for a thousand talents, has as free forgiveness as he who owed by one hundred pence: being made to confess they have nothing to pay, God as frankly forgives the one as the other.

This renders the good news of the gospel still better. It proclaims a full, as well as a free salvation—a perfect deliverance from sin and misery—a perfect title to all good—for it is written, “whosoever believeth shall never perish, but shall have eternal life.” All his debts shall be fully discharged—all his crimes so forgiven, that God will remember them no more—a good title shall be made out to the heavenly inheritance, and he shall enter upon present possession by faith, as the sure earnest of his eternal possession. Blessed, for ever blessed, is every creature who heareth and believeth the words of this gospel—he shall be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus.

But it may be said, why should the gospel be preached to every creature, since all do not receive it? It must be preached for that very reason. All who heard the apostles were not converted. God acts herein as a sovereign. He follows the unerring counsel of his own will. He publishes his laws, which are infinitely just and holy, and if his creatures will break them, he leaves them to the consequences of their transgression. So does the Parliament of this land. It would be a strange reason for not passing a good law, because it was foreseen some would break it and forfeit their lives. It becomes more necessary on that very account. In the same manner the great lawgiver acts. To some his gospel is a savour of death unto death; to others a savour of life unto life. The fault is not in the gospel, but in the hearers. It was exactly suitable to their case, and a perfect remedy for their distress, but they would not take it. Ye will not come unto me, says Christ, that ye may have life—ye reject your own mercies through an evil heart of unbelief, and therefore God will be glorified in letting the law take its course. Where his mercy is despised his justice will be honoured—and they shall perish from the presence of the Lord who knew not God, and obeyed not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. □

Christian Doctrines Explained: 2. Revelation

Q.2. *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

A. The word of God (which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament) is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

To reveal something is to disclose it or make it known. Our English word comes from a Latin one which means “to draw back the veil.” In some countries today the women wear a veil when in public and their identities are not easily recognised. At home a woman will ‘draw back’ her veil so that her face is clearly visible within her family circle. God’s revelation of Himself is like this.

Reason

God has given us each a mind. It is one of the main features which distinguish us from the animals. We have an ability to think, to reason and to come to an understanding of things. We are able to study facts and to reach conclusions. By use of our reason we may learn many things, even things about God. But our reason alone cannot discover the way of salvation and enable us to find God. For that God must reveal Himself clearly to us.

We must distinguish two types of divine revelation, termed *general* and *special*. Both reveal God but in a different way and to different people and for different ends.

General Revelation

General revelation enables men to know *about* God. By the works of creation and providence (the things which God has made and which He does) a knowledge of God is conveyed to the minds of all men everywhere, religious or pagan. That is why it is called *general* (or natural) revelation. This revelation tells us that there *is* a God, which is the first and most important thing to know. It tells us that He is good, wise and powerful, worthy of worship, and that we should pray to Him. Knowing these things we are without excuse for our unbelief; our knowledge will count against us at the Judgment. But general revelation cannot tell us *how* to pray or enable us *to* pray; nor can it assure us that God will receive our prayers. It cannot show us God’s ‘face’.

Special Revelation

God shows us how we are to come to Him in another way – in His word. He chose to specially reveal Himself to men at different times and in

different ways, showing them how to be saved from sin. This revelation was only to the church (Psa.147:19,20). It is termed *special* revelation or God's *revealed* will, because it reveals man's duty clearly. With the blessing of God upon it special revelation enables us to know God *Himself* – which is eternal life (John 17:3).

God has preserved the whole of His special revelation in written form. He gave His word to prophets and apostles by inspiration, enabling them to write down exactly what He wished His people to know. This revelation was completed soon after the coming of Christ and is found in the two Testaments of our Bible. The Scriptures are the only rule or standard to direct us in the great task of glorifying God. They are absolutely necessary for the salvation of our souls. Value them and make them your study “all the day” (Psa.119:97). □

The Reformation in Scotland: 2. *Patrick Hamilton*

(The articles in this series are taken from “History of the Church of Scotland” by William M. Hetherington, first published in 1842.)

Providentially for the Lollards of Kyle, James IV. himself presided at their trial,—a monarch who, with all his faults, had yet too much of manliness and candour to permit his judgment to be greatly swayed by the malignity of the prelates. Adam Reid appears to have taken the chief part in the defence, and to have answered with such spirit, point, and humour, as to amuse James, and baffle the bishop completely. The result was, that they were dismissed, with an admonition to beware of new doctrines, and to content themselves with the faith of the Church.

No new persecutions for heresy occurred during the reign of James IV.; and after his death on the fatal field of Flodden, the attention of the nobility and the clerical dignitaries was too much occupied with the prosecution of their own selfish and factious designs, to bestow much regard upon the progress of religious opinions. James Beaton had been translated from Glasgow to the archbishopric of St Andrews, and, in conjunction with the Douglas faction, ruled the kingdom with considerable ability during the minority of the young king, James V. According to Spotswood, Beaton “was neither violently set, nor much solicitous, as it was thought, how matters went in the Church.” Still, notwithstanding their political cares, the clergy were aware that the writings of the Continental Protestant divines were beginning to be

introduced, as appears from an act of Parliament passed in 1525, strictly prohibiting the importation of all such writings, and also forbidding all public “disputations about the heresies of Luther, except it be to the confusion thereof, and that by clerks in the schools alenarlie [alone].” Nor was their anxiety unfounded. There is great reason to think that some of these Protestant writings had about this time fallen into the hands of a youth whose rank and talents shed lustre on the cause which he espoused.

Patrick Hamilton, a youth of royal lineage, and not less distinguished by the possession of high mental endowments, was the chosen instrument by means of whom “the Father of lights” rekindled in Scotland the smouldering beacon of eternal truth. Being designed by his relations for the Church, there had been conferred on him, even in infancy, the abbacy of Ferne,—a foretaste of the wealth and honours to which he might aspire, and a stimulus to quicken his ambition. But while his friends were anticipating for him a splendid career of worldly pomp and power, a very different path was preparing for him. The ambitious and worldly, yet ignorant priesthood, by whom he was surrounded, began to mark with jealous eye his altered manner, to note suspiciously the praise which he gave to the study of ancient literature in preference to the dry logic of the schools, and the severe terms in which he condemned the abounding corruptions of the Church. Partly, perhaps, to avoid the danger to which he was thus exposing himself, but chiefly to obtain a more complete knowledge of the doctrines of the Reformation, he resolved to visit the Continent in 1526. With this view he naturally directed his course to Wittenberg, where he was speedily honoured with the friendship and esteem of Luther and Melancthon. After enjoying the benefit of their society for a short time, he proceeded to the University of Marbourg, where he obtained the instructions of the celebrated Francis Lambert. But the more that his own mind acquired of the knowledge of divine truth, the more earnestly did he long to return and communicate that knowledge to his beloved countrymen.

The return to Scotland of this noble youth at once attracted all eyes, as if a new star had appeared in the heavens. His instructions were listened to with the deepest attention, and the doctrines which he taught began to spread rapidly throughout the kingdom. His high birth, reputation for learning, the attractive elegance of his youthful aspect, and the persuasive graces of his courteous demeanour, rendered his influence almost irresistible; and the popish clergy saw no safety to their cause but in his destruction. They framed their murderous plans with fiend-like ingenuity. Being apprehensive that the young king might not readily be persuaded to sanction the death of one who stood to him in the near relationship of

cousin, they contrived to send him on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Dothess, or Duthack, in Ross-shire. They next decoyed Patrick Hamilton to St Andrews, on the pretence of wishing to have a free conference with him on religious subjects. Pursuing their perfidious plot, they caused Alexander Campbell, prior of the Blackfriars, to hold several interviews with him, and even to seem to concede to his opinions so far as to draw from him a full avowal of them. Their measures being now ripe for execution, they caused him to be apprehended under night, and committed to the Castle.

The very next day he was brought before the Archbishop, and a large convention of bishops, abbots, priors, and other dignitaries and doctors of the Church, and there charged with maintaining and propagating certain heretical opinions. John Knox declares, that the articles for which he was condemned were merely those of "*pilgrimage, purgatory, prayers to saints, and prayers for the dead,*" although matters of greater importance had been in question. Spotswood, on the other hand, specifies thirteen distinct articles of much graver character, which were condemned as heretical, and he condemned for holding them. The probability is, that both statements are true; that the articles specified by Spotswood are those "matters of greater importance" to which Knox alludes; but that in declaring their sentence publicly, no mention was made of any but the four topics stated by Knox, because to have done otherwise would have been to have published tenets themselves, which they wished to consign to oblivion. Such, indeed, has been the policy of persecutors in all ages,—to fix the attention of the public, as far as possible, on the external aspect and the non-essentials of the subject in dispute, thereby to conceal the truth, while they are destroying its defenders. So acted the Romanized English prelates towards the Culdees, as we have already seen; and so, as we shall afterwards see, acted the persecutors of the Church of Scotland in different periods of her history.

The sentence of condemnation was pronounced; and, to give it all the weight of authority, every person of name and rank, civil and ecclesiastical, was induced to sign it; amongst whom was the Earl of Cassilis, a boy of thirteen years of age. Arrangements were then made to carry it into effect that very day. The pile was erected in front of the College of St Salvador, and the youthful martyr hurried to the stake. Before being bound to the stake, he divested himself of his outer garments, and gave them to his servant, who had attended him faithfully and affectionately for a number of years, accompanying the gift with these tender and pathetic words:—"This stuff will not help me in the fire, and will profit thee. After this you can receive from me no more good, but the example of my death, which, I pray thee, keep in mind; for albeit it be

bitter to the flesh, and fearful in man's judgment, yet is it the entrance into eternal life, which none shall possess that denies Christ Jesus before this wicked generation." A train of gunpowder, laid for the purpose of setting fire to the pile, exploded ineffectually, scorching his left side and face, but leaving the mass unkindled. While they were procuring materials of a more combustible nature, the calm spirit of the scorched sufferer poured itself forth in earnest exhortations and instructions to the pitying spectators. The treacherous Friar Campbell attempted to disturb him by calling him to recant, and pray to the Virgin Mary; which drew from the dying martyr a severely solemn reproof, ending with an appeal and citation to the judgment-seat of the Lord Jesus. The pile was then effectually kindled; and as the flames blazed up all around him, his voice rose calm and clear,—“How long, O Lord, shall darkness cover this realm? How long with Thou suffer this tyranny of men? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”—and with these words his spirit returned to God who gave it.

Thus died Partick Hamilton, the first Scottish martyr, on the last day of February 1528, and in the twenty-fourth year of his age. He died a victim to the malice and the treachery of the popish priesthood; but his death did more to recommend the cause for which he suffered to the heart of Scotland, than could have been accomplished by a lengthened life,—as a sudden flash of lightning at once rends the gnarled oak of a thousand years, and yields a glimpse of the strong glories of heaven. □

Precious Psalms: 2. Kiss the Son

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” (Psalm 2:12)

On the pages of world history and in the pages of the Bible there is one figure who stands head and shoulders above the rest. He is not acknowledged by all; indeed He is “despised and rejected of men” (Isa.53:3). Yet of all who have ever lived He is by far the most important. So significant is He that in this psalm God refers to Him as “my king” (v.6) and “my Son” (v.7). He is the Lord's anointed, Jesus Christ.

Warning

We are not to trifle with Christ. There is the danger of perishing eternally. A solemn warning is given to avoid His anger. Kings and

judges of the earth, men of power, need to learn wisdom in this regard, and so must we all. What provokes this One who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt.11:28)? It is the sin and rebellion of mankind, deserving God’s wrath and curse. Even the first flaming of divine anger burning against our sin is greatly to be feared.

Direction

What is the wise thing for sinners to do? We should “Kiss the Son.” The hand of a superior is kissed as a token of reverence and subjection. Is it not fitting that we poor sinners, in need of grace and forgiveness, “kiss” the mighty Lord Jesus, bowing before Him and giving Him glory? A kiss on the cheek is a sign of friendship and affection. Is there love in your heart for this Redeemer? Have you pledged your loyalty to Him? Then you will endeavour to hold Him fast in the embrace of faith.

Comfort

Believers in Christ are truly blessed, for He has “delivered us from the wrath to come” (1Thess.1:10). He did it by becoming the sin-bearer for His people, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pet.2:24). The wrath of God visited Him and so it shall never visit those who are *in* Him. Remember, fire can never burn the same ground twice. □

For Young People: *Birds of the Bible*

2. The Raven – Bird of Providence

“Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them” (Luke 12:24)

There could be no greater contrast than between the previous bird and this one. The splendid peacock has all the colours of the rainbow – while the raven appears all in black! The peacock is greatly valued but the raven is often associated with evil.

This tells the story of man. When he was created man bore the image of God in his soul. He had knowledge, righteousness and holiness. He loved and enjoyed God. In his original state we could say that man was “as proud as a peacock” – though all his glorying was in God alone. Then sin entered and what a change took place! Death came and man lost all that made him great. His soul became as black as a raven. Now he boasts in himself. But God has not abandoned him.

Ravens belong to the Crow family which includes magpies and jays. They have powerful wings and a strong bill and feet. They will eat almost anything and are scavengers, sometimes seeking out sick animals and waiting for them to die. They have a keen sense of smell which enables them to find their prey or 'carriion'. Their call is a distinctive 'croak'. They are found on the hills and cliffs in the north and west of Britain. Their large nests are made of sticks and may be seen high in trees.

Tame ravens are kept at the Tower of London. According to one story, Britain will be invaded if these ravens are lost. Whether true or not, the raven can certainly teach us, for in the Bible it is the *bird of providence*.

By providence we mean God's care of the world. God preserves all things and directs everything according to His great purpose, which is to glorify Himself and to save His people. God often intervenes in our lives, particularly when we are in need and call upon Him for help.

The raven is the first bird mentioned in the Bible. In Genesis a notable providence takes place. A great flood carries away millions into eternity. Only Noah and his family are safe inside the ark. Eventually the ark comes to rest. The waters are receding and many mountain tops can be seen through the window. But how is Noah to know when the lower land is dry again? "And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth" (Gen.8:7). Wise Noah knows that if there is dry land then the raven will find it, for this bird will be attracted to the animal carcasses covering the ground and will not be seen again. But the raven keeps coming back to the ark. We must learn to wait for the Lord's time.

There is a common providence which we all see each day, and several times a day. We have food on our table. Do you take this for granted? Or do you believe that your parents provide it, or the shopkeeper, or the farmer? Remember, food is *God's* gift to you. Yes, others worked, but God worked first, and God worked through them. You should look to Him for your food each day. Even the ravens do this in a way! "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Psa.147:9). Do you cry to God in prayer? The Lord Jesus taught us to ask our Father in heaven to supply our daily needs. "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). And we should be even more eager for the "bread of life" in the gospel, Christ the Saviour from sin, who satisfies the hungry soul (John 6:35).

God can provide for His people in unusual ways too. He once used ravens to provide food for His servant Elijah. It was a time of great drought and severe famine. The Lord told Elijah to go to a certain river. "And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there" (1Kings 17:4). Perhaps many of us would

think, “I can’t believe that! It couldn’t happen. I won’t go!” Elijah though was obedient, and God’s promise was fulfilled. “And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook” (v.6). The birds served Elijah his breakfast and supper! A remarkable providence. This was surely the hand of God because ravens, of all birds, would hardly take up food without eating it themselves! In His providence God may work against the natural course of things. Truly God governs all His creatures and all their actions.

Jesus used the ravens to illustrate God’s provision and care. That God looks after them means that God will look after us, for “how much more are ye *better* than the fowls?” Before we can trust in the providence of God though we must first trust in the God of providence. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself to die for sinners? Calvary was the greatest event in all of providence and Jesus the greatest gift that a loving God could give. He has provided us with the Saviour we need.

Consider the ravens! □

Gàidhlig: A Thighearna, Ciod as aill leat mis’ a’ dheanamh? (Seonaidh Mac ‘ill Eathainn)

Anns an iris mu dheireadh, thug sinn sùil air ais air a’bhliadhna a ‘chuir sinn, agus chunnaic sinn cho fialaidh ‘s a’ fhuair sinn bho làmh an Tighearna. Bhiodh e freagarrach dhuinn mar luchd-aideachaidh a bhi ‘g urnaigh airson na tha fhathast air taobh-a-muigh cearcal gràis an Tighearna, gun eòlas pearsanta aca air Crìosd, ‘s mar sin as eugmhais dòchas. Tha e cho cudthromach gum biodh an t-eòlas seo aig gach aon chum gum greimicheadh iad air a’ ghealladh nach eil ri fhaotainn ach ann an Crìosd a’ mhàinn.

Feumaidh gach àon againn bàsachadh don pheacadh agus maitheanas fhaighinn bho’n Tighearna. Feumaidh sinn seirbhis a’ dheanamh dhàsan agus chan ann don t-saoghal, oir chaneil buanachd ach ann an Crìosd. ‘S ann an Crìosd tha sith ri fhaotainn agus tha t-sìth seo maireannach.

Ma tha thu fhein fhathast gun Chrìosd, co air a tha do ghreim aig an am seo? Am bheil thu riarachta agus sàsaichte leis na bheil agad?

Is iomadh neach a bha air a’ mhealladh leis an nàmhaid ag innseadh dhaibh gun ro pailteas an t-saòghail seo dol ga shàsachadh. Ach is iomadh truaghan ris an do choinnich an Tighearna nuair bu lugha duil aige agus a’ thuig an uairsin culbheartan an t-sàtain. Seall Sol o’ Tharsis, mar a’choinnich Crìosd ris air an t-slighe gu Damascus. Leugh

seo dhuit fhein ann an Gniomharan nan Abstoil anns an naodheamh caibteal. Abair fhein agus faic a'bhuanachd a'fhuair Sol! Seall gràs Dhè air a' nochdadh ann am freasdal do Phòl; chaidh e thairis o bhàs gu beatha agus bho dhorachadas gu solus. Thadhar ag radh mu thiomchail anns an àonamh earrann deug "Oir feuch, tha e ri ùrnaigh."

Bheir gràs an Tighearna atharrachadh air do bheatha a bhitheas chum buanachd dod anam. An e seo a bu mhiann leat fhein ma tha thu aig an dearbh am seo gun èolas pearsanta air an Tighearna Iosa Crìosd, an Slanuighear. Cuimhnich, chan ann na do neart fhein a tha seo gu bhi gabhail aite. 'S ann le Dia a tha tearuinteachd an anam. Tha an Tighearna ag radh ann an ait' eile; "Chan ann le neart, no le cumhachd, ach le mo spioraid-sa deir an Tighearna." (Sechariah 4:6) □

Congregational News

Communion Services

The services at our Communion will be as follows (D.V.):-

Thursday 10th April: 12.00noon; 7.30pm

Friday 11th April: 12.00noon; 7.30pm

Saturday 12th April: 12.00noon; 6.00pm (prayer meeting)

Sabbath 13th April: 11.00am (prayer meeting);

12.00noon (the Lord's supper); 6.30pm

Monday 14th April: 12.00noon

Further details will be intimated in due course.

Fellowships

We hold a fellowship in the manse usually after the evening service on the second Sabbath of each month. The meetings begin at 8.00pm and all are welcome. The subject for the year is 'The Worship of God'. We have already looked at general principles and the Regulative Principle. In March we intend to study worship in the Old Testament. In April we hope to have a fellowship with the ministers visiting for the Communion.

Prayer

We thank the Lord for His good hand upon those of our number who have been away for hospital treatment in recent months. Please remember them in prayer that they may enjoy a full recovery and remember also those who are facing surgery soon. "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield" (Psa.33:20). □

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Services:

Sabbath: 12.00noon; 6.00pm

Wednesday: 7.30pm

Communions: 2nd Sabbath in April and September

All services are held in the church at Bayhead.

Website: www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk

Sermons preached in the congregation are recorded and may be downloaded from the website. Alternatively they are available in CD or tape format. Please contact the minister for further details.

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