

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. 2 No. 1

January-February 2009

Grace & Truth

Vol. 2 No. 1

January-February 2009

Contents

Minister's Message: <i>Waiting upon the Lord</i>	1
Helps to Devotion: <i>Instruction</i>	2
Parables of Jesus: <i>7. The Growing Seed</i>	3
Sermon: <i>On Christian Love</i>	4
Christian Doctrines Explained: <i>7. Creation</i>	10
The Reformation in Scotland: <i>7. The Rise of John Knox</i>	12
Precious Psalms: <i>7. God our Judge</i>	16
For Young People: <i>Birds of the Bible: 7. The Sparrow</i>	17
Gàidhlig: <i>Bha aoibhneas orm an uair a' thubhairt iad rium, Do thaigh an Tighearna theid sinn</i>	19
Congregational News	20

All correspondence relating to the magazine should be sent to the Editor:
Rev. David M. Blunt, Free Church Manse, Knockintorran, Isle of North Uist,
HS6 5ED. Tel. 01876 510305 Email: davidblunt@fcccontinuing.org

Grace & Truth is published bimonthly and distributed free of charge.
Donations towards costs are welcome and may be sent to the Treasurer
(details on inside rear cover). Cheques, etc. should be made out to 'North Uist
& Grimsay Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)'.

Minister's Message: *Waiting upon the Lord*

One of the virtues of the Christian life, if we may call them that, is patience. Rarely is this virtue found in man as a natural quality. In today's society especially patience is hardly encouraged. We can obtain most of the material things we need (and many that we do not) quite easily. Leisure activities abound and opportunities to engage in them are plenty. Entertainment is available at the press of a button.

It seems that many also expect to find lasting happiness and contentment in such easy ways. When disappointment comes they become frustrated and bitter with life. Some turn to extreme pursuits and lifestyles, hoping in vain to obtain through these what they cannot obtain elsewhere. Tragically many of our young people are following this destructive path, devoting themselves to drink and drugs and even worse.

The testimony of the believer is that "the Lord is good unto them that *wait* for him, to the soul that *seeketh* him" (Lam.3:25). This is true in the beginning of our Christian experience. Perhaps we sought the Lord for many years before we found Him, or rather He found us. We were blind in our sin and unbelief but God was gracious to us, giving us an understanding of our need and bringing us to Christ for salvation. Our souls were then at peace and rejoicing in the Lord and His mercy.

There have been many times too when we have had to wait upon God as Christians. Perhaps we have faced opposition because of our testimony to the Lord. We have endured the difficulty and have prayed earnestly until relief has come. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" (Psa.37:7). It is the godly who prosper in the end, not those of the world.

Perhaps guidance has been required by us in living our lives to God's glory. We have searched the Scriptures prayerfully and perseveringly until God has given us the direction we need. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psa.37:5). Our confidence was that of the psalmist: "in thy light shall we see light" (Psa.36:9). At length the Lord answers the cries of His burdened people.

There is certainly a need for God's people to wait upon Him at the present time. In our land both church and nation are in a sad state. Churchmen and politicians alike seem unable to cope with the problems affecting these two great institutions. Indeed by their pronouncements and actions they only make matters worse! The Bible speaks to us in our current woes: "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast

forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?" (Jer.2:17). In laying aside both the law and the gospel we are destroying ourselves.

We may be thankful that the Lord has His watchmen in Zion yet. They are the ones who plead constantly for His cause in private and speak boldly for His cause in public as He enables them. We need many more such.

In this new year let us not lose hope of seeing better days but heed what the psalmist says: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psa.27:14). It would be good if we were able to wait more upon the Lord as this year unfolds. May we all know God's rich blessing as we seek Him and serve Him. □

Helps to Devotion (Rev. James Smith)

INSTRUCTION. *"Teach my thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."* (Psalm 86:11)

It is no use praying to be taught, if we are not willing to obey; for all religion is more or less practical. What is the use of knowing God's way, if we are not willing to walk in it? David desired to know the will of God that he might do it; and to be taught the truth of God that he might walk in it. He desired to serve God with all the strength of his soul, therefore he prayed that his heart might be united. God will not accept of a divided heart, nor can he approve of a wandering heart. Therefore, as our hearts are ever prone to go out after the world, and to wander in search of forbidden objects, our frequent prayer should be that God would apply a remedy, and unite our hearts to fear his name. O Lord, thou art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee; therefore we pray thee to teach us thy way,—the way in which thou wouldst have us walk with thee, that we may please and honour thee. We wish, we desire to walk in thy truth, doing the will of God from the heart. But, alas! our hearts are so prone to wander, and are ever ready to start aside like a broken bow; be pleased, therefore, by the power of thy love, and by the operations of thy Spirit, to unite our hearts, that we may wholly serve thee, and evermore love thee. Bind our hearts to thyself; and let our whole souls reverence thy authority, worship at thy throne, and obey thy sacred precepts. O for grace to make us thine entirely, and to keep us thine for ever! O for the power of the Spirit, to subdue our wills, elevate our affections, enlighten our understandings, make our consciences tender, and lead us in the way everlasting! □

Parables of Jesus: 7. The Growing Seed

(Please read Mark 4:26-29)

This parable is also about the sowing of seed. It describes the growth of God's kingdom through the preaching of the gospel and especially the life of a Christian from the beginnings of grace to final glory.

After sowing his corn a farmer must get on with other things. The result is now out of his hands. How wonderful when something is glimpsed above the ground! A tiny seed has come to life. It is really beyond our understanding. The power of life is not from man or from the earth by itself: it is God-given. So with religion in the heart.

Blade

The first evidence we may have that a seed has germinated is when a green blade breaks the soil's surface. Life begins before the shoot appears but until then it is hidden under the earth and cannot be detected.

The first clear signs of spiritual life we expect to see are faith and repentance. Some teach that man is able to produce these things himself. Scripture says they are the gifts of God (Eph.2:8; Acts 11:18). And they only appear because God has already given new life to the soul in regeneration. If the shoots of faith and repentance do not grow out of this root they will shrivel up and die.

Ear

As the plant thrives under the influence of the sun and rain it develops a tall, strong stem, with the ear forming at its top. This is where the corn will be found. The whole plant really exists to produce this grain.

The person of the sinner is justified through faith in Jesus Christ and his whole nature is renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. As he grows in grace by the Word and Spirit his faith, hope and love increase abundantly. As he dies to sin the outlines of the divine image are seen more and more (Eph.4:24).

Full Corn

The growing plant is nourished from the soil and remains healthy. It withstands the attack of every storm, disease and pest. In time the grain in the ear swells to its proper size.

A Christian needs to feed his soul by regularly hearing the Word of God, by prayer and by fellowship with other believers. Only in this way

will he be kept from spiritual danger and prosper under every trial and affliction. His life will bear the appropriate fruit of holiness and good works to the glory of God.

Harvest

When ripe the ears of corn begin to hang down under their own weight. They are ready for harvest and a wise farmer does not delay but quickly gathers his valuable grain.

The Lord Jesus watches carefully over His own harvest. When grace has ended its work in a believer's life He puts in the sickle and reaps (v.29). "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa.116:15). From this world He is taking a full, rich harvest. Will *you* be bound in one of His sheaves? □

Sermon: On Christian Love (Rev. Hugh Latimer)

(A sermon preached on October 28th 1552 – three years before Latimer, the godly bishop of Worcester and a leader of the English Reformation was burned at the stake in Oxford with his fellow-sufferer Nicholas Ridley for the sake of Jesus Christ.)

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." – John 15:12

Seeing the time is so far spent, we will take no more in hand at this time, than this one sentence; for it will be enough for us to consider this well, and to bear away with us. "This I command unto you, that ye love one another." Our Saviour himself spake these words at his last supper: it was the last sermon that he made unto his disciples before his departure; it is a very long sermon. For our Saviour, like as one that knows he shall die shortly, is desirous to spend that little time that he has with his friends, in exhorting and instructing them how they should lead their lives. Now among other things that he commanded this was one: "This I command unto you, that ye love one another." The English expresses as though it were but one, "This is my commandment." I examined the Greek, where it is in the plural number, and very well; for there are many things that pertain to a Christian man, and yet all those things are contained in this one thing, that is LOVE. He lappeth up all things in love.

Our whole duty is contained in these words, "Love together." Therefore St. Paul saith, "He that loveth another, fulfilleth the whole law;" so it appeareth that all things are contained in this word Love. This love is a precious thing: our Saviour saith, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye shall love one another."

So Christ makes love his cognizance, his badge, his livery. Like as every lord commonly gives a certain livery to his servants, whereby they may be known that they pertain unto him; and so we say, yonder is this lord's servants, because they wear his livery: so our Saviour, who is the Lord above all lords, would have his servants known by their liveries and badge, which badge is love alone. Whosoever now is indued with love and charity, is his servant; him we may call Christ's servant; for love is the token whereby you may know that such a servant pertaineth to Christ; so that charity may be called the very livery of Christ. He that hath charity is Christ's servant: he that hath not charity, is the servant of the devil. For as Christ's livery is love and charity, so the devil's livery is hatred, malice, and discord.

But I think the devil has a great many more servants than Christ has; for there are a great many more in his livery than in Christ's livery; there are but very few who are indued with Christ's livery; with love and charity, gentleness and meekness of spirit; but there are a great number that bear hatred and malice in their hearts, that are proud, stout and lofty; therefore the number of the devil's servants is greater than the number of Christ's servants.

Now St. Paul shows how needful this love is. I speak not of carnal love, which is only animal affection; but of this charitable love which is so necessary, that when a man hath it, without all other things it will suffice him. Again, if a man have all other things and lacketh that love, it will not help him, it is all vain and lost. St. Paul used it so: "Though I speak with tongues of men and angels, and yet had no love, I were even as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal. And though I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge; yea, if I had all faith, so that I could move mountains out of their places, and yet had no love, I were nothing. And though I bestowed all my goods to feed the poor, and though I gave my body even that I were burned, and yet had no love, if profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. 13). These are godly gifts, yet St. Paul calls them nothing when a man hath them without charity;

which is a great commendation, and shows the great need of love, insomuch that all other virtues are in vain when this love is absent. And there have been some who thought that St. Paul spake against the dignity of faith; but you must understand that St. Paul speaks here not of the justifying faith, wherewith we receive everlasting life, but he understands by this word faith, the gift to do miracles, to remove hills; of such a faith he speaks. This I say to confirm this proposition. Faith only justifieth: this proposition is most true and certain. And St. Paul speaks not here of this lively justifying faith; for this right faith is not without love, for love cometh and floweth out of faith, love is a child of faith; for no man can love except he believe, so that they have two several offices, they themselves being inseparable.

St. Paul has an expression in the thirteenth chapter of the first of the Corinthians, which according to the outward letter seems much to the dispraise of this faith, and to the praise of love; these are his words, "Now abideth faith, hope, and love, even these three; but the chiefest of these is love." There are some learned men, who expound the greatness of which St. Paul speaketh here, as if meant for eternity. For when we come to God, then we believe no more, but rather see with our eyes face to face how he is; yet for all that, love remains still: so that love may be called the chiefest, because she endureth for ever. And though she is the chiefest, yet we must not attribute unto her the office which pertains unto faith only. Like as I cannot say, the mayor of Stamford must make me a pair of shoes because he is the greater man, yet it is not his office to make shoes; so though love be greater, yet it is not her office to save. Thus much I thought good to say against those who fight against the truth.

Now, when we would know who are in Christ's livery or not, we must learn it of St. Paul, who most evidently described charity, which is the very livery, saying, "Love is patient, she suffereth long." Now whosoever fumeth and is angry, he is out of this livery: therefore let us remember that we do not cast away the livery of Christ our master. When we are in sickness or any manner of adversities, our duty is to be patient, to suffer willingly, and to call upon him for aid, help, and comfort; for without him we are not able to abide any tribulation. Therefore we must call upon God, he has promised to help: therefore let me not think him to be false or untrue in his promises, for we cannot dishonour God more than by not believing or trusting in him. Therefore

let us beware above all things of dishonouring God; and so we must be patient, trusting and most certainly believing that he will deliver us when it seems good to him, who knows the time better than we ourselves.

“Charity is gentle, friendly, and loving; she envieth not.” They that envy their neighbour’s profit when it goes well with him, such fellows are out of their liveries, and so out of the service of God, for to be envious is to be the servant of the devil.

“Love doth not frowardly, she is not a provoker;” as there are some men who will provoke their neighbour so far that it is very hard for them to be in charity with them; but we must wrestle with our affections; we must strive and see that we keep this livery of Christ our master; for “the devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking to take us at a vantage,” to bring us out of our liveries, and to take from us the knot (bond) of love and charity.

“Love swelleth not, is not puffed up;” but there are many swellers now-a-days, they are so high, so lofty, insomuch that they despise and condemn all others: all such persons are under the governance of the devil. God rules not them with his good Spirit, the evil spirit has occupied their hearts and possessed them.

“She doth not dishonestly; she seeketh not her own; she doth all things to the commodity of her neighbours.” A charitable man will not promote himself with the damage of his neighbour. They that seek only their own advantage, forgetting their neighbours, they are not of God, they have not his livery. Further, “charity is not provoked to anger; she thinketh not evil.” We ought not to think evil of our neighbour, as long as we see not open wickedness in him; for it is written, “You shall not judge;” we should not take upon us to condemn our neighbour. And surely the condemners of other men’s works are not in the livery of Christ. Christ hateth them.

“She rejoiceth not in iniquity;” she loveth equity and godliness. And again, she is sorry to hear of falsehood, or stealing, or such like, which wickedness is now at this time commonly used. There never was such falsehood among Christian men as there is now, at this time; truly I think, and they that have experience report it so, that among the very

Infidels and Turks there is more fidelity and uprightness than among Christian men. For no man setteth any thing by his promise, yea and writings will not serve with some, they are so shameless that they dare deny their own hand-writing: but, I pray you, are those false fellows in the livery of Christ? Have they his cognizance? No, no; they have the badge of the devil, with whom they shall be damned world without end, except they amend and leave their wickedness.

“She suffereth all things; she believeth all things.” It is a great matter that should make us to be grieved with our neighbour; we should be patient when our neighbour doth wrong, we should admonish him of his folly, earnestly desiring him to leave his wickedness, showing the danger that follows, namely, everlasting damnation. In such wise we should study to amend our neighbour, and not to hate or do him a foul turn again, but rather charitably study to amend him: whosoever now does so, he has the livery and cognizance of Christ, he shall be known at the last day for his servant.

“Love believeth all things:” it appears daily that they who are charitable and friendly are most deceived; because they think well of every man, they believe every man, they trust their words, and therefore are most deceived in this world, among the children of the devil. These and such like things are the tokens of the right and godly love: therefore they that have this love are soon known, for this love cannot be hid in corners, she has her operation (work): therefore all that have her are well enough, though they have no other gifts besides her. Again, they that lack her, though they have many other gifts besides, yet it is to no other purpose, it does them no good: for when we shall come at the great day before him, not having this livery (that is, love) with us, then we are lost; he will not take us for his servants, because we have not his cognizance. But if we have this livery, if we wear his cognizance here in this world; that is, if we love our neighbour, help him in his distress, are charitable, loving, and friendly unto him, then we shall be known at the last day: but if we are uncharitable towards our neighbour, hate him, seek our own advantage with his damage, then we shall be rejected of Christ and so damned world without end.

Our Saviour saith here in this gospel, “I command you these things:” he speaketh in the plural number, and lappeth it up in one thing which is,

that we should love one another, much like St. Paul saying in the thirteenth to the Romans, "Owe nothing to any man, but to love one another." Here St. Paul lappeth up all things together, signifying unto us, that love is the consummation of the law; for this commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," is contained in this law of love: for he that loveth God will not break wedlock, because wedlock breaking is a dishonouring of God and a serving of the devil. "Thou shalt not steal;" he that loveth his neighbour as himself, will not take away his goods. I had of late occasion to speak of picking and stealing, where I showed unto you the danger wherein they are that steal their neighbour's goods from them, but I hear nothing yet of restitution. Sirs, I tell you, except restitution is made, look for no salvation. And it is a miserable and heinous thing to consider that we are so blinded with this world, that rather than we would make restitution, we will sell unto the devil our souls which are bought with the blood of our Saviour Christ. What can be done more to the dishonouring of Christ, than to cast our souls away to the devil for the value of a little money? – the soul which he has bought with his painful passion and death! But I tell you those that will do so, and that will not make restitution when they have done wrong, or have taken away their neighbour's goods, they are not in the livery of Christ, they are not his servants; let them go as they will in this world, yet for all that they are foul and filthy enough before God; they stink before his face; and therefore they shall be cast from his presence into everlasting fire: this shall be all their good cheer that they shall have, because they have not the livery of Christ, nor his cognizance, which is love. They remember not that Christ commanded us, saying, "This I command you, that ye love one another." This is Christ's commandment. Moses, the great prophet of God, gave many laws, but he gave not the Spirit to fulfil the same laws: but Christ gave this law, and promised unto us, that when we call upon him he will give us his Holy Ghost, who shall make us able to fulfil his laws, though not so perfectly as the law requires; but yet to the contentation (pleasing) of God, and to the protection of our faith: for as long as we are in this world, we can do nothing as we ought to do, because our flesh leadeth us, which is ever bent against the law of God; yet our works which we do are well taken for Christ's sake, and God will reward them in heaven.

Therefore our Saviour saith, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light," because he helpeth to bear them; else indeed we should not be able to

bear them. And in another place he saith, “his commandments are not heavy;” they are heavy to our flesh, but, being qualified with the Spirit of God, to the faithful which believe in Christ, to them, I say, they are not heavy; for though their doings are not perfect, yet they are well taken for Christ’s sake.

You must not be offended because the scripture commends love so highly, for he that commends the daughter, commends the mother; for love is the daughter, and faith is the mother: love floweth out of faith; where faith is, there is love; but yet we must consider their offices, faith is the hand wherewith we take hold on everlasting life.

Now let us enter into ourselves, and examine our own hearts, whether we are in the livery of God, or not: and when we find ourselves to be out of this livery, let us repent and amend our lives, so that we may come again to the favour of God, and spend our time in this world to his honour and glory, forgiving our neighbours all such things as they have done against us.

And now to make an end: mark here who gave this precept – Christ our Saviour himself. When and at what time? At his departing, when he should suffer death. Therefore these words ought the more to be regarded, seeing he himself spake them at his last departing from us. May God of his mercy give us grace so to walk here in this world, charitably and friendly one with another, that we may attain the joy which God hath prepared for all those that love him. *Amen.* □

Christian Doctrines Explained: 7. Creation

Q.9. *What is the work of creation?*

A. The work of creation is God’s making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

It is popular today to believe that the universe is the result of chance. From a ‘big bang’ billions of years ago there eventually came simple life forms, developing into complex ones. This idea is termed ‘evolution’.

The Bible is our only source of knowledge on the universe’s origin and it teaches ‘creation’. Science cannot solve the problem of origins because it involves events not witnessed by man. God says: “Where

wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38:4).

Beginning

Scripture teaches that the universe had a beginning. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen.1:1). The theory of evolution says that the material of the universe is eternal. But the Bible uses phrases like “before the world began” (2Tim.1:9). Only God is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Psa.90:2).

Maker

The universe was made by God. He created space, time and everything. “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible” (Col.1:16). Every effect must have an adequate cause. The universe could not form itself. It consists of space, time and matter or energy. The cause of space must be something greater than space – something *infinite*; likewise the cause of time must be something *eternal* and the cause of matter or energy something *omnipotent*. The true explanation for the universe therefore can only be something (or Someone) infinite, eternal and all-powerful: a *Creator*.

Command

God commanded the universe into being. “The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb.11:3). He created matter then formed it over six days into every living and non-living thing. Man was His final creation. God had power to do all this at once, but He set a weekly pattern of work and rest for man.

Good

God made the universe very good. At the close of the sixth day “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen.1:31). His mind planned every detail and His power brought it about. We may well ask, What went wrong with the world, that there is now so much evil and suffering in it? Only the Bible has the answer. It says that sin entered into the world, the work of the devil and man.

Glory

The universe reveals God’s glory. By its order and beauty the creation, though spoiled by sin, still testifies to the goodness, wisdom and power

of its Designer: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa.19:1). David knew this. “I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa.139:14). Our conscience tells *us* the same. □

The Reformation in Scotland: 7. *The Rise of John Knox*

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

Soon after the death of Cardinal Beaton, a number of the gentlemen of Fife, who favoured the reforming party, entered into the castle of St Andrews, thus both giving countenance to the deed of the conspirators, and securing a place of strength in which they could defend themselves while they were endeavouring to make their peace with the Regent. This, however, it was not so easy to accomplish, instigated as he was by the clergy to avenge in the most exemplary manner the death of their leader. The Regent laid siege to the castle in August; but it was by this time so well garrisoned and supplied with both provisions and ammunition from England, that the besiegers could make no impression upon it, and at length entered into terms of agreement and a suspension of hostilities with the defenders. John Rough, formerly chaplain to the Regent before his relapse into Popery, had entered into the castle of St Andrews, along with the Fifeshire gentlemen, previous to the commencement of the siege; but upon the suspension of the hostilities he extended his preaching to the town, to which he then gained ready access. He was there encountered by John Annan, a popish priest and dean, and being inferior to his antagonist in learning, made application for aid to one who was destined to become the man of the age.

This was John Knox, the great Scottish Reformer. He had been educated for the Romish Church; but his bold and penetrating mind could not be held in the trammels of mere priestly and scholastic authority, and at a very early period of his public life he showed his disposition to disregard antiquated dogmatism, and to walk freely on the paths of light and liberty pointed out by the Word of God. His mind had received some benefit in its early researches by the teaching of the Regent’s two chaplains, Guillaume and Rough; but the clear doctrines, the heart-warm love, and the heavenly piety of the martyr Wishart,

completed his conversion to the reformed faith. About the beginning of April 1547, he entered the castle of St Andrews, partly drawn by respect to those by whom it was held, and partly induced to seek an asylum within it from the hostility of the popish clergy, who seemed already to have marked him out as a dangerous opponent, and therefore to be cut off as soon as possible; but chiefly to aid Rough in the controversy with Annan. Soon after his arrival, the people of the place, together with Rough, resolved to give John Knox a solemn and public call to be their minister. He was at first overwhelmed with anxiety when he thought of the awful responsibility of the ministerial office, but durst not refuse the call; and from that hour manifestly regarded himself as devoted, with all his energies of mind and body, to the preaching of the everlasting gospel.

Knox being thus publicly called to his great work, proceeded immediately to place the controversy between the reformers and the Papists on its proper basis. Instead of waging a skirmishing warfare of outposts, he directed his efforts against the very heart of the enemy's position. Instead of contending about rites and ceremonies, the licentious lives of the priesthood, and minor errors and perversions of doctrine, he boldly stated, and offered to maintain, the proposition, that the papal Church of Rome is Antichrist. From the hour when that proposition was boldly announced, are we disposed to date the real beginning of the Reformation in Scotland; because from that hour it was manifest that there could be no compromise,—no retaining of anything in form, government, or doctrine, which had no other authority than what was derived from the practice or the teaching of an apostate and antichristian body,—no appeal to any standard than the Word of God.

A public disputation was held in the presence of the sub-prior, between Knox and the priests; the effect of which was prodigious upon the numerous audience, who now clearly perceived that the popish party were unable to maintain their cause in argument. Nor were the prelates unaware of their danger; and therefore they prepared to overwhelm by force what they could not oppose successfully from reason and Scripture. Having procured assistance from France, they again besieged the castle, not only by land, but also by sea, by means of the French galleys, which blockaded the harbour, thereby cutting off their supplies from England. After a gallant resistance the defenders were obliged to capitulate, on the 31st day of July 1547, making their terms with the French commander, and stipulating that their lives and

liberties should be preserved. These terms, however, were not kept; for immediately upon the return of the French fleet to France, the prisoners, instead of being set at liberty, were confined to the galleys as slaves.

The triumph of the popish party was great; but it was of brief duration. The Duke of Somerset, protector of England in the minority of Edward VI., resenting the perfidy of the Regent and his counsellors, invaded Scotland at the head of a powerful army, and inflicted on the Scottish forces a severe defeat at the battle of Pinkie. This had little other effect than of throwing the ruling party in Scotland more completely into the arms of France, and thereby hastening the decisive struggle. In a parliament held at Stirling in 1548, it was resolved to send the young Queen of Scotland to France, first to be educated there, and then married to the dauphin.

After hostilities had continued for some time between Scotland and England, of a harassing rather than a destructive character, a peace was concluded, in which France also was embraced; and, in consequence of the application of the English ambassadors, John Knox was released from the galleys, and allowed to return to England. He resided for some time in that country; and while there, refused the offer of the bishopric of Rochester, which he could not accept, because he regarded prelacy as without the sanction of scriptural authority. From England Knox proceeded to the Continent; and, after being for some time pastor of a Protestant church at Frankfurt, whence he withdrew on account of the usurpation and intolerance of an English prelatial party, went to Geneva, where he remained till his return to Scotland in the year 1555.

But during this interval some things occurred which deserve to be mentioned, that the series of events may not be left unconnected. After the taking of the castle of St Andrews, and the banishment of its defenders, the popish party continued their efforts for the suppression of the incipient Reformation; in which they promised themselves the more complete success that Knox was not no longer present to defend it. Adam Wallace, who was tutor in the family of Ormiston, was accused of heresy, and burned on the Castle Hill of Edinburgh. Several gentlemen of property, accused of favouring the reforming party, were banished, and their estates forfeited. Councils of the clergy were held at Linlithgow, and at Edinburgh, for devising measures, not only to extirpate heresy, but also to reform such glaring abuses as excited public odium, hoping thereby to allay the general desire of further

reformation. Some of the regulations passed by these councils were good in themselves, but as they were left to be carried into execution by the very persons who were interested in the perpetuation of abuses, they remained generally inoperative. In the mean time, the reforming party were left without a leader. Several of the nobility, and the inferior barons of considerable influence, continued to favour the views of the reformers, but contented themselves with retaining their opinions, and waiting for a more propitious juncture. The zeal of the persecutors seemed also to abate. They flattered themselves that they had succeeded in suppressing heresy in Scotland; and they returned to their old employment of engaging in political intrigues.

There was at this time a double course of intriguing carried on; and, on the one side, by a person who proved herself an adept in the art,—namely, the Queen-mother. It was her desire to obtain the regency, and yet not to give direct offence to the Earl of Arran. She contrived, therefore, to form a party against him among the nobility and gentry who were attached to the principles of the Reformation, to whom, secretly, she promised protection. At length Arran, feeling his influence departing, resigned the regency, which was given to the Queen-mother, Mary of Guise, on the 10th of April 1554. She thus reached the summit of her ambition; and had the state of torpor into which the Reformation had been cast continued, she might, in all probability, have enjoyed her power for a considerable time, and with no little reputation; for she was possessed of superior abilities, untroubled by conscientious scruples, and able to gild over her designs by plausible artifice and deep dissimulation.

But the mind of Scotland was not allowed to remain long in this state of torpidity. The accession of Mary to the English throne on the lamented death of Edward VI. produced an immediate change in religious matters throughout the island. The fierce persecution which arose in England drove several of the English Protestants to Scotland, where they renewed the public preaching, which had been for some time in a great measure suppressed. Of these, the most distinguished were William Harlow and John Willock, the latter of whom was afterwards colleague to John Knox.

At length, in the end of harvest, in the year 1555, John Knox himself returned to Scotland, and resumed his reforming labours with double energy, zeal, and success. From Edinburgh, where he first recommenced his toils, he proceeded, along with the justly celebrated John Erskine of Dun, to Angus and Mearns, where he preached in

public for a month, rekindling in that district the embers of the Reformation. His next position was at Calder House, where he resided for some time as the friend and guest of Sir James Sandilands, preceptor or provincial grand-master of the Knights of St John, who had been for some time attached to the reformed faith, and was a person distinguished talents, blameless life, and great weight and dignity of character. In his mansion Knox held intercourse with Lord Erskine, subsequently Earl of Mar, and Regent; the Lord of Lorn, afterwards Earl of Argyle; and Lord James Stewart, an illegitimate son of James V., afterwards Earl of Murray, “the Good Regent.” By his intercourse with these noblemen, Knox was at that time framing the nucleus of what subsequently grew in to a power capable not only of assuming an attitude of self-defence, but of wielding the kingdom. □

Precious Psalms: 7. God our Judge

“The Lord shall judge the people: judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.” (Psalm 7:8)

This Psalm has been called “The Song of the Slandered Saint.” David sang this song “concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite” (title). It seems that this man had gone to King Saul and made accusation against David of treason against the throne. Although this was untrue, Saul, being jealous of David, was very likely to believe the allegation and to act accordingly. It was all most unjust. What is the wronged believer to do in such a situation?

Judge

The saint should with the Psalmist remind himself that there is One who judges the people. God is “the Judge of all the earth” and He always does right (Gen.18:25). In heaven “his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men” (Psa.11:4). He keeps a full record of every thought, word and deed of every man. In His providence he shows His righteous judgments upon men daily, although this may not be grasped by us. An all-holy God is the one Judge we may always be confident of.

Cause

The wronged believer should take His case to God and say, “Judge me.” If His cause is ours, then our cause will be His: He will defend us and

avenge us when we are wronged. David pleads his own righteousness and integrity. He does not mean his righteousness toward God, in justification or in sanctification. He means his sincerity towards Saul, before whom he had always acted uprightly (1Sam.24:11). He does not claim to be innocent in general but in this particular case. He is willing to stand or fall according to his conduct here.

Vindication

The child of God should expect a vindication from on high. “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness” (Psa.18:20). And if he does not receive it now, he should remember that there is a final judgment yet to come, when God will put every remaining wrong to right. □

For Young People: *Birds of the Bible*

7. The Sparrow – Bird of Sorrow

“I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Psalm 102:7)

The sparrow is one of our most common birds. Like the swallow which we looked at last time, it seems to like the places where we live. In fact one species is named the House Sparrow because it is so often found in our towns and villages. I am sure that you have seen this bird where you live, round about your home or in your garden, as it looks perhaps for seeds, insects or any edible scraps that man has left behind.

Small flocks of sparrows may be seen perched on buildings or searching the ground for food, often chirping loudly. By nature the sparrow is a cheerful bird and it is only really content when in company. Here in the Bible though we meet a strange thing: a sparrow *all alone*. The Psalmist, usually so joyful in the Lord, is on this occasion so distressed in his soul that he feels himself to be just like such a sparrow.

Something we quickly learn as Christians is that the life of faith, though a blessed one, is not free from sorrow. Sin has made this world a sad place. There is sickness and suffering, disease and death. God’s people are not spared these things. But there are also burdens to be carried *because* we are believers. Christ is our first love and we have pledged ourselves to serve Him, come what may. We must always stand for what is true and right and defend His cause.

Jesus said: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, *and take up the cross*, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). As Christians we have many privileges. We have fellowship with other believers in the body of Christ. We belong to loving families and faithful congregations. But no church or family or Christian is perfect! We may find that other Christians misunderstand us, brothers or sisters oppose us, and congregations become divided.

It is easy to become discouraged in the Christian life today. We see society becoming more greedy, violent and immoral. If we speak out against sin few will sympathise with us. If we are really zealous for the Lord then we may be on our own. When we experience such things our feelings are often hurt. We are like the sad and lonely sparrow on the rooftop. Other believers, including Elijah and Jeremiah in Scripture, have been there before. Are there any encouragements for Christians in these times of sorrow?

We should reflect that we are *precious to God*. The sparrow is a dull, drab bird of little worth among men. Jesus said: “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?” (Matt. 10:29). Likewise many may think little of God’s people and mock and mistreat them. Yet Jesus says to them, “ye are of more value than many sparrows” (v.31). To Him they were worth the shedding of His own precious blood when He died for their sins to redeem them. “Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (1Cor. 7:23).

We should consider that we are *remembered by God*. Even the tiny sparrows are cared for by God. Jesus said: “One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father” (v.29). Think of the millions of sparrows in the world. God remembers them all. He keeps everything in His creation. But especially He watches over His own children and delivers them in their time of trouble. Jesus says to them, “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (v.30). That is how well He knows them and all their circumstances! So God does not forget – not even for one minute – His own people in their different trials. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

We should know that we are *going to God*. Just as the sparrow will be sad at times so Christians will mourn while they are in this world, not only because of the sin which they see in others but because of the sin which they see in themselves. God chastises them for it and they long to be delivered from it all. And one day they shall be! These words of Jesus are for them: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).

Here God's people are being prepared for heaven. Their sorrows as well as their joys are needed to make them holy like their Saviour. When by grace every trace of sin has finally been removed from their hearts then "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 20:4) and they shall be perfectly happy. Then they shall look back and understand all the way which the Lord led them. The words which they had often sung on earth shall mean so much to them then. "For but a moment lasts his wrath; life in his favour lies: Weeping may for a night endure, at morn doth joy arise." □

Gàidhlig: Bha aoibhneas orm an uair a' thubhairt iad rium, Do thaigh an Tighearna theid sinn – Salm 122:1 (Seonaidh Mac'ill Eathainn)

Tha an Salm seo air a' chùinntais mar aon air am bheil eòlas aig mòran agus tha e 'togail fa chomhair gach aon againn an tlachd a tha aig an t-salmaidh air a' bhi 'dol a thaigh an Tighearna. Nach math gu bheil iad ann fhathast, thall 's a 'bhos, aig am bheil iarrrtas air a bhi 'cuir an aghaidh air an eaglais air Latha – na – Sàbaid. Ma tha thu air do chùinntais mar aon dhuibh seo 's dòcha gum bi e cuir iongnadh ort carson nach eil an tuilleadh a' tighinn a mach. Nach iomadh àdhbhar a tha an salmaidh a' toirt dhuinn airson tighinn a thaigh an Tighearna: toirt buidheachas do Dhia; bhi 'g urnaigh airson sìth dha fhèin is do chàch agus air sgàth ar Tighearna Dia. Tha beannachdan an Tighearna ann an teistanas mhòran a nuas thar na bliadhnaichean agus nach iomadh neach a fhuair fuasgladh agus freagart air na h-ìomcheistean a' bhiodh a 'togail ceann na'm beatha.

Tha Bhliadhn' Ùr air tòiseachadh agus an t-sèann bhliadhna air crìochnachadh agus tha ceist a' cumail air bruidhinn rinn uile mu thimcheall ar n' anam agus ar Dia. Tha an earrann seo anns an t-salm a' labhart mu thiomcheall an fheadhainn sin air am bheil aoibhneas a' dol a thaigh an Tighearna. Nach math dhoibhsan air am bheil an t-aoibhneas seo! Tha feadhain eile ann tha dol dhan eaglais agus a tha fhathast a feitheamh ri fuasgladh air na cuibhricean gus an dean iadsan mar an ceudna aoibhneas an lathair an Tighearna. Tha mòran eile nach eil a' dol faisg air eaglais agus nach eil ag iarraidh tighinn a' steach. Nach truagh an suidheachadh a tha iad ag altrum. 'Se cheist dhoibh air an latha seo: Cò neo dè anns am bheil sibh a' deanamh aoibhneas? Bheil sibh a' tuigsinn a' chunnart anns am bheil sibh? 'Se

ùrnaigh sluagh an Tighearna gum bitheadh càch a' cuir an aghaidh air taigh an Tighearna agus gum bitheadh iad a' cuir èolas pearsanta air an Tighearna Ìosa Crìosd a 'thug E fhein suas airson truaghain pheacach mar tha sinne.

Annas a' bhliadhna seo ma 'se seo do shuidheachadh, carson nach smàoinich thu air an t-Siorraidheachd a tha air thoiseach ort agus stiùr do cheum a' dh'ionnsaigh taigh an Tighearna far an cluinn thu facal an Tighearna air a' shearmonachadh agus a' bhi g' ùrnaigh gu faigh thu dòchas na do bheatha a' chuireas aoibhneas air do shiubhal. □

Congregational News

Birth

As a congregation we were pleased to learn of the safe arrival on 11th November of Finlay Donald, a son for Mr & Mrs Norrie MacRitchie of "The Meadows," 18 Knockintorran. May the Lord bless the family. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Psa.127:3)

Induction

On 19th December the Rev. Kenneth Macdonald, formerly of Snizort in Skye was inducted as minister of the congregation of Scalpay which is in our own Presbytery. We pray that the Lord's blessing will follow this event and that Mr Macdonald will know much spiritual fruit in his new sphere of labour.

Fellowships

Our monthly fellowships this year will be on the theme of 'Truth and Error'. The aim is to compare the teachings of the major world religions and some of the cults with the teachings of the Bible and the historic Christian faith. In a day of much ignorance and confusion we trust that these studies will help us by strengthening our confidence in Christ as the only Lord and Saviour and enabling us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

The meetings in January and February (D.V.) will look at the subjects of Buddhism and Hinduism respectively. Further details will be intimated in due course. The meetings are held in the manse beginning at 8.00pm and are open to all who are interested. For more information visit our website: www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk □

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

Minister: Rev. David M. Blunt

Free Church Manse, Knockintorran, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5ED

Tel. 01876 510305

Email: davidblunt@fccontinuing.org

Session Clerk: Mr. John Maclean

“Aignish”, Knockline, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5DT

Tel. 01876 510351

Email: seonaidhmaclean@yahoo.co.uk

Clerk to Deacons' Court: Mr. John Maclean

“Aignish”, Knockline, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5DT

Tel. 01876 510351

Email: seonaidhmaclean@yahoo.co.uk

Congregational Treasurer: Mr. Lachlan M. MacLeod

11 Strumore, Lochmaddy, Isle of North Uist, HS6 5AG

Tel. 01876 500297

Email: MacLeodLM@aol.com

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.

Issued by the Kirk Session of
North Uist & Grimsay Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)