

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. 4

July-August 2009

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Minister's Message: *The Church and the Word*

Every church has its problems. This is only to be expected for the members of Christ's church on earth are all sinners. The Lord's people have been saved by God's marvellous grace but each one of them is only partly sanctified in this life. What the Lord said to Joshua He says to us today: "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (Josh.13:1).

For this reason Paul exhorts believers to put on "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col.3:12,13). In this spirit of brotherly love the cause of Christ goes forward in the world.

In what way did Christ forgive us? Freely of course! But how did our pardon come to us? Did Christ simply absolve us with no action at all on our part? No! He first convinced us of our sin and misery, making us aware of our guilt before God, showing us our involvement in Adam's original sin, the corruption of our nature and our many personal breaches of God's law. Only when we had repented of our sin were we acquitted and brought into the enjoyment of fellowship with God and His people.

Fellowship among Christians is only possible when believers submit to the same authority for their belief and behaviour. The supreme standard for the faith and life of the church in every age is Scripture and *only Scripture*. The Lord Jesus Christ is the church's sole King and Head and He exercises His authority over her through His Word alone.

Whether it be in doctrine, worship or practice individual churches have no right to enforce or permit anything within their bounds except what is written in God's Word or may be fairly deduced from it. We cannot pick and choose where the authority of Scripture is concerned.

This brings us to a topical matter. All right-thinking people were appalled at what took place at the recent General Assembly of the Church of Scotland over the call of an openly-homosexual minister to a charge in Aberdeen. We may be thankful that there are still many in the Kirk who are prepared to say that homosexual practice is sinful according to the Word of God, as indeed it is. The Bible says, "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination" (Lev.20:13). However the same Bible also says, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1Tim.2:12). If Scripture is supreme in the question of sodomy then surely it should also be supreme in the question of women in church office? Yet the battle in the Kirk over that issue was given up long ago.

When Scripture is no longer allowed to govern the affairs of a church then the time has come for those who love the Lord, having made their views known, to move elsewhere. Apostatising churches may even go so far as to cast out godly people. What does Scripture say? “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2Cor.6:14). The Lord promises to receive such and be a Father to them. We will never, ever lose out by being faithful to God’s infallible Word! □

Helps to Devotion (Rev. James Smith)

BLESS ME INDEED. *“Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!”* (1 Chronicles 4:10)

Jabez was evidently taught of God. He knew his own weakness, and was aware of the dangers to which he was exposed. He had no confidence in the flesh; but he had confidence in God. His prayer was the utterance of his heart, as all prayer should be. It was a direct appeal to God. He asked for what he wanted; he pleaded for what he earnestly desired. He valued God’s blessing, and therefore he sought it. He knew that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and therefore he set his heart upon it. Can we not pray as he did? We have the same God to go to; we have stronger encouragement to go; and surely we have as much need as he had. O Lord, bless us indeed. Give us a real blessing, a large blessing, a full blessing. Bless us with a full pardon, with unspeakable peace, with entire sanctification. Enlarge our hearts, to contain more of thy love, and to devise greater things for thy glory. If it will be for our good, and lead us to honour thee more, increase our temporal supplies; but on this point we wish heartily to say, “Not my will, but thy will be done.” Let thine hand be with us, to sustain us, to deliver us, and to thrust out our enemies from before us. Keep us from the evil within us, that it may not break out; keep us from the evil without us, that it may not overcome us; keep us from the Evil One, that he may not afflict and grieve us; keep, O keep us, from the evil that is in the world, that it may not ensnare or injure us. May we be kept by thee at all times; and be so kept, that no sin may be indulged by us, no temptation be too strong for us, nor any duty or privilege be neglected, under any pretence whatever. □

Parables of Jesus: 10. The Leaven

(Please read Matthew 13:33)

Leaven is an old word for yeast, a simple fungus used in brewing and baking. It works with sugar and water to decompose the substance in which it is placed. This fermentation produces a gas which causes the substance to be agitated or to swell.

Because of its degrading effect leaven in the Bible often symbolises moral or spiritual corruption. Jesus warned His disciples to “beware of the leaven” of the Pharisees and Sadducees, meaning their false doctrine (Matt.16:6,12). Believers must purge out the “old leaven” of sin in their lives (1Cor.5:7,8). In this parable though Jesus uses the idea of leaven to describe something *good*.

Life

A woman is pictured busy at a daily task – making bread to feed her family. Having mixed flour, water and salt she takes another vital ingredient and adds it to the bowl. The leaven is a living thing and soon it will give ‘life’ to the bread.

Jesus is illustrating the effect of the gospel in the world. On account of Adam’s first sin all mankind forfeited spiritual life. We are “dead in sins” (Eph.2:5) – as lifeless as a piece of dough without yeast. Even when the gospel is preached and we hear of a Saviour’s love we are unwilling and unable to respond. Something must enter us from outside and give us life. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bless the word of truth to our souls that we may be born again.

Hidden

After it is mixed with the dough the leaven is hidden. It cannot be seen, but the results of its working are.

To some God’s kingdom consists in fine buildings and elaborate rituals. To others it is a matter of earthly prosperity. But Jesus says: “The kingdom of God is *within* you” (Luke 17:21). Believers are the “temple of God” and the Holy Spirit dwells in them (1Cor.3:16). Grace must work in our hearts to make us fit for heaven, changing us spiritually into the glorious likeness of Christ our Lord.

Time

After the dough has been kneaded it is left to rise. The yeast does not

work instantly but gradually. Only when the dough has fully risen is it placed in the oven for baking.

Today's church looks for 'instant' results in evangelism. People are presented with a few selected gospel truths (and often some *untruths*) and pressed into believing. Ministers and missionaries who labour faithfully may see few conversions and be tempted to change their methods. This parable should encourage us to hold fast and be faithful.

We may see little success in our day but in time all humanity shall be blessed by the gospel. Jesus shall finally gather His redeemed people out of *every* land, "from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south" (Psa.107:3). They *shall* come, and the more we live godly lives ourselves the more blessing we shall bring to others. □

Sermon: Everlasting Love (Rev. Kenneth A. MacRae)

(Taken from The Free Church Pulpit published in 1927. At the time when the sermon was preached Mr MacRae was minister of Kilmuir & Stenscholl in the Isle of Skye.)

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." – Jeremiah 31:3

This age asks for novelties. The old doctrines are contemptuously cast aside as outworn dogmas, and that consideration is denied them which is essential to a true estimate of their worth. It is enough that they are old; they must go. For such a spirit the Lord will never cater. His great Gospel message to fallen man is unchanging as Himself, and those who desire religious novelty must go elsewhere than to the Word of God. As for ourselves, the age and the unchangeableness of the Gospel message but recommend it all the more to us, for we know that we are upon rock-ground. Only what has stood the test of time will stand the test of death and eternity.

The prophet's message was an ancient one; there was nothing novel in it; it was as old as Jehovah Himself. Israel was still loved, despite all her backslidings, for she was loved with an everlasting love. And if Israel after the flesh had her own place in this declaration, how much more the spiritual Israel?

In this message the following points call for consideration:–

I. The Declaration

There is a declaration of love made here. Is it not natural then to inquire—Who are the parties concerned? Who is this Lover, and who is the loved one? The Lover is none other than Jehovah Himself, the Unchangeable, the Omnipotent One, the Great Ruler of the Universe. Who then can the loved one be? Upon whom can *He* fix His affections? Who so glorious as to win *His* love? Our first impulse is to turn to the heavens high, but she is not there, for the voice is not heard on earth. Who is this but the whole company of the elect, an innumerable company of poor, guilty sinners! That the Holy One should fix His love upon such will be the wonder of eternity. These, then, are the parties, and now what of the declaration itself?

It is a declaration of old standing. But that does not mean that it is not still valid. It is not like the love-letter of one long dead. When you read such a letter, the deep, tense expression of true love there affects your heart and you feel the power of it, but when you come to the signature, it at once comes back to you that this is the love of one who died long, long ago, and the power of it melts away in a moment. Such is not the love that is here. It is the love of Him Who is eternal, and, therefore, although of long standing, it is as potent as ever. It is not a love of yesterday, or we would have no guarantee that it would be a love of tomorrow; but an eternal past guarantees an eternal future.

It is an oft-repeated declaration. Many a time had Israel received this message. Many a time it came to cheer when she had nothing else, for as a rule it was in the hour of her extremity that the Lord anew made His love known to her. He knows how to time His love visits. It is an oft-repeated declaration in the experience of the gracious soul. Not once have you heard it, but as often as you felt that you were about to sound the very depths of despair. When hope was all gone, when every evidence of your soul's interest in Christ was removed, then was the time of His breaking in upon you through all your darkness to assure you that you were still what you ever were—the object of His everlasting love.

It is a public declaration. At the mouth of the prophets He made it, and then, in order to give it perpetuity, He inscribed it in His own holy Word. And as if that were not enough, He sent out His messengers throughout all ages commissioning them to go even to earth's utmost ends with the proclamation of this message. No message ever has been made more public.

These are some who attach great importance to dreams and visions

of the night, and their confession is, that if only they were vouchsafed some such experience as they have heard spoken of by sundry of the Lord's people, then they would have no more fear as to their soul's salvation. But surely those are foolish who would stake their expectation of salvation upon a dream. If Satan can present himself as an angel of light, is it beyond his power to deceive the soul with a dream? We have a far surer ground upon which to rest our hope than dreams, even the unchanging, inerrant Word of Him Who cannot lie. To a dream you can have no witnesses, but when you base your hope upon God's blessed Word you can call men, angels, and devils to witness that this is given in God's own hand, and is God's own promise. You can go to God with His own Word as the warrant of your hope; you cannot go with a dream.

It is a declaration which will never be retracted. Some draw back at the eleventh hour. Some draw back even after the wedding party have assembled. Love sometimes has flown away before the marriage day dawned, and left nothing behind but memories and broken promises. And you, poor soul, are often afraid that the Lord will yet give you over. It is your dark, sinful heart and your frequent backslidings that make you so fear, but, ah! if He draw back even in your case alone, then He must erase for ever this verse from the Book of His Word, and what will then become of the love that He called everlasting? No, it can never be.

II. The Love Made Known in the Declaration

It is an everlasting love; therefore it had no beginning. Who can trace out the beginnings of what is everlasting? What has a beginning can never be everlasting in the sense in which the term is used here, that is—eternal. And, if it be eternal then it must be sovereign love, for a love that loved before the loved one had being surely could not have loved because of anything in that one. We love for what we see in the object of our affections, but God loves sovereignly, since He loves eternally. No matter where we enter in at the Word of God, sooner or later we are led to the wondrous and glorious mystery of Jehovah's sovereignty.

It is an everlasting love; therefore it has no end. How great the folly of Arminianism which can imagine the soul as loved today and cast off tomorrow, as though Jehovah were more faithless than an earthly father! We have evidence that Satan knows the Scriptures well, and therefore no Arminian is he, but yet he would pretend to be, and, oh! poor soul, were you an Arminian too, how could you stand against him? He comes to you, "Ah, these sins and these failings—you have

gone too far. The Lord will cast you off as He cast off in Israel those who fell in the wilderness”—and your soul is in sore distress. But this, or some other sweet word, comes to your relief, and you give it to him in the teeth with a cry of triumph—“Oh, Satan, He says that He loves me with an everlasting love, and Him I believe and not you”; and that is too much for Satan, and he retires in confusion. But it is not long till he is back again persistent as ever. “Oh, it is all very well to be singing your Psalms and saying your prayers and pretending to be so zealous before men, but wait till you come to die. Death is what will test you and your religion, and in that day, I warrant you, you will turn out a wretched hypocrite.” And, oh! soul, you are very much afraid that Satan has the truth at last. But stay, tell me in all your experience had you ever one love-visit from Christ? Can you point back to one day in your life when Christ came in love to your poor soul and your whole heart broke into singing at the sight of His glory? Have you one such day in your experience? If you have, it is an evidence that He loved you, and, if He loved you then, He loves you still; and He will ever love you, for His love is an everlasting love and not death itself can terminate it.

Thus I see it—that love wherewith He loves you—stretching on and on long after your body has mouldered in the tomb, on through the unknown years that are yet to come out of the womb of the eternal purposes, on to the Resurrection Morn, on, interminably on, till the Judgment Day is over and the doors of heaven and hell locked fast for ever; on and on through an endless eternity, till creature eyes can gaze no more. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”

III. The Manifestation of this Love

Love must manifest itself—that is its nature. A love that does not manifest itself is only a shadow, a thing without life. A dead love may have a wondrous beauty, but it is a thing without power—weep over it if you will, but it will profit you nothing, for it is dead.

How then does this love manifest itself, for as an eternally living love it must have eternally an ever-present manifestation? What has your past experience of it been? Is it not as the text declares? Did it not draw you? It was love that drew you, not the law. The law wakened but it did not draw. The law cannot draw, it can only drive. The law wakened you and drove you from your sins, and love eventually came in and met you and drew you to the Lord. Had love not met you, you would have returned at length to your sins again, as many another has

done who has known something of the fiery awakening of the law yet has never been met by the sweet drawings of the eternal love. This has been your experience, has it not? Very well then, it solves a question you have had oft before you—"Can it be that I am really beloved of the Lord?" Had He not loved you He had never drawn you, therefore the gracious drawing is God's evidence to you of His love for you.

But the text says that you have been drawn with loving-kindness. How so?

There is a little one waking suddenly at midnight. How dark it is! How quiet it is! How lonely! And the little eyes wander out through the window and gaze a moment at the quiet, quiet stars shimmering silently down upon a sleeping world. Ah, how lonely! And the tears come, but at the first whimper a tender arm comes quietly around the frightened child and he feels himself drawn into the warm shelter of the mother-breast, and all is well; tears and loneliness are all forgotten, and the little eyes close in placid content. Friend, that is a picture of your soul's experience. You have found yourself out in the night with hope almost gone, and your spirit has been overwhelmed with the loneliness of life. Hard by from out of the darkness seemed to come the triumphant laugh of the Foul Fiend, and your affrighted spirit trembled within you. But ah! just then you felt the touch of a tender Hand—it was only a touch, the touch of a hidden Hand in the night, but it was enough, and thus you were drawn by His loving-kindness.

There is a father there troubled because he must needs take away the plaything of his child. To do so he is loath, but it must needs be done or harm may hap the little one. At last the plaything is removed, and oh! the grief is poignant, but tenderly the father kisses the tears away, and then, after that, the loss is not so hard to bear. And is not that your soul again? The Lord sees that some idol or some engrossing interest must needs be removed ere your soul suffer loss. He is loath to do it, but it must needs be done, and at last the blow falls, and, oh! it is cruel. But He takes you up and He kisses you with the tender kisses of heavenly consolation, and after that, although flesh and blood still cry out, it is not so hard to bear.

Has He not drawn you thus?

Tired out with the play of the long, long summer's day, the little one stumbles in and falls fast asleep upon the floor. Gently the mother bears him to a couch, lays a coverlet over him, places a pillow under his head, and leaves him to his slumbers. Utterly worn out with the long struggle against sin, you have thrown yourself down in despair at the

side of life's way, unable to take one other step upon the heavenly journey. Thus Christ found you. And tenderly He lifted you and laid you to rest in the couch of His promise, covered you with the coverlet of His love, and put a pillow under your weary head that you might awake with strength renewed. And this was the pillow He put under you:—

“Whom have I in the heavens high
but thee, O Lord, alone?
And in the earth whom I desire
besides thee there is none.”

Do you feel your heart going out afresh after Him while you listen to His Word? Has all the coldness, the hardness, and the unbelief melted away, and do you feel once more that Christ is supremely precious to your soul? Then this is one more love visit; then once again Christ has come to you to make known the fact that He still loves you with this wondrous, everlasting love; and it is just because of this that He now in grace draws you.

Perhaps you feel your heart drawn out to Him who never felt it so before; in a strange new way a hungry heart goes out wistfully after Him. Then this is an evidence that a day of power has come and that He has made you willing, and if He has, then you also are loved with this everlasting love. Many a weary step you will have to take yet ere you reach Zion's gate, and many a time you will lose sight of your Heavenly Lover, but never will you lose His love. And, remember, when Satan tempts you to despair, that a lost sense of His love is no evidence of love departed.

And do you who know nothing of this love, not feel troubled at your lack of it? Is it nothing to you that you are outside Christ's love? Can you with equanimity face life without it? You may, although at best it is a lonely business, but can you face death without it? Can you face eternity without it? Can you face judgment without it? Oh, be wise, and in a day of grace, and while strength and reason remain, knock at a door of mercy and your errand cannot be in vain, for His promise is, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Then you, too, may take this declaration to yourself, and you, too, will find in your experience the gracious drawing of His loving-kindness. Knock, then, without delay! Haste, time flies! Realise that the longer you delay the more likely you are to be found outside this love in eternity—a lost soul sobbing for ever in outer darkness. □

Christian Doctrines Explained: 10. The Covenant of Works

Q.12. *What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?*

A. When God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience: forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death.

God's covenant with man is a key doctrine of the Bible, running like a thread through the whole. The basic meaning of our English word is "to come together." A covenant is a bond or agreement between parties involving mutual promises to give or to do something. Judas Iscariot, Christ's betrayer, covenanted with the chief priests: "What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver" (Matt.26:15). Marriage is a familiar form of covenant, in which a man and woman make solemn pledges to each other.

Parties

Immediately after man was created and while he was yet holy, God entered into a covenant with him. It was an act of condescension on God's part, for He had no need to do it. The initiative was wholly His. The two parties were far from being equals and so the covenant terms were devised by God alone. In the way of a covenant man would know and enjoy God not only as his Maker and Master but also as his Friend.

In the covenant of works Adam, as the natural father of all mankind, was chosen by God to represent the whole human race. So what he did as our head, *we* did. We may be sure that this was a wise arrangement.

Promise

The promise God made to man was to give him *life*. There would be the continuation of physical life, the union of the soul with the body, and of spiritual life, the union of the soul with God. And there would in time be the donation of eternal life, the perfect, unbreakable, intimate union of the soul and body with God. This reward was signified by the "tree of life" which was in the midst of the garden of Eden (Gen.2:9). Thus the covenant of works is sometimes called the covenant of life.

Condition

Something was required of Adam that the promise of God might be fulfilled in him and in those he represented. He must perform *perfect*

obedience to the will of God. The moral law was already written in his heart. In addition God gave him a special command not to eat of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen.2:17). Adam’s obedience was to be perfect in its principle – love to God; in its extent – thoughts and words as well as deeds; in its degree – every action; and in its duration – always and forever.

Penalty

A punishment was announced to Adam for disobedience. Concerning the forbidden fruit God said: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*.” As the life promised was threefold, so was the death threatened. If man sinned he would become liable to physical death, the separation of the soul and body; he would experience immediate spiritual death, the separation of the soul from God; and he would become worthy of eternal death, the separation of the soul and body from every comfort of God in hell. □

The Reformation in Scotland: 10. Queen Mary

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

This barbarous deed stirred the heart of the reforming party in Scotland, like the sound of a trumpet. The people of St Andrews raised a great pile of stones on the spot where he was burned, to commemorate his martyrdom. The Lords of the Congregation complained to the Queen-regent against the unparalleled barbarity of the bishops. And the Protestant preachers availing themselves of the ferment throughout the kingdom, broke through the restraints to which they had submitted for the sake of peace, and began to preach with increased fervour and publicity. But the measures of the Queen-regent were not yet matured, and therefore she renewed her deep dissimulation.

She declared to the Protestant lords that she was not guilty of the death of Walter Mill, who, being a priest, belonged properly to the jurisdiction of the Church. She engaged to do everything in her power to procure redress in a legal form from parliament; and succeeded in deceiving the Lords of the Congregation, which she could not venture openly to offend till she had procured their aid in accomplishing her own deep scheme.

In the parliament which met in October 1558, she contrived to balance the bishops, the party headed by Arran, and the Lords of the Congregation, against each other, in such a manner as to procure the consent of all that the crown matrimonial should be given to Francis, who would thereby be King of both France and Scotland. In the same parliament, previous to the completion of this arrangement, the Lords of the Congregation were prepared to present a petition seeking the redress of the grievances in religious matters of which they had previously complained; but the wily Regent contrived to induce them to withhold it for the present, and to content themselves with publicly reading such a protest as should completely reserve their right to have the subject reintroduced when another opportunity should occur. To the protest the Queen-regent answered verbally, that she would remember what was protested, and put order afterwards to all that was in controversy. With this promise the Protestant lords were satisfied, and their suspicions lulled asleep. But having now gained her object in securing the crown-matrimonial to the Dauphin of France, she gave private assurance of support to the Archbishop of St Andrews, and consulted with him how, most thoroughly and speedily, to suppress the Reformation.

Dr Robertson has stated very clearly and convincingly the deep and daring scheme of the princes of the house of Lorraine, brothers of the Queen-regent of Scotland, with which that able and unscrupulous princess was fully acquainted, and which formed, in truth, the leading principle of all her own political machinations. It was to the following effect: The formation of a league between France and Spain for the utter destruction of the Reformation throughout Europe; and as England was the most powerful Protestant kingdom, and Elizabeth was now its sovereign, it was necessary that she should be dethroned, and the crown bestowed on a popish monarch. As Mary, the young queen of Scotland, was the nearest heir to the English crown, it was thought that the best method of accomplishing their design would be, by suppressing the Reformation in Scotland, establishing the French and popish influence in that country, and through it assailing Elizabeth. It was essential to the complete arrangement of this gigantic scheme that the crown-matrimonial of Scotland should be secured to the Dauphin of France, Mary's husband; and for this reason did the Queen-regent employ all her artifice to blind and cajole the Lords of the Congregation, and to induce them to consent to recognize Francis and Mary as king and queen of Scotland, distinctly promising that she would then, supported by the authority of the kingly name, make such arrangements as should protect

their preachers and themselves from the malice and hatred of the bishops, and promote the reformation of religion.

Having now accomplished her purpose, the Queen-regent prepared to throw aside the mask which she had so long worn. Accordingly, in the end of December 1558, with her concurrence, the preachers of the reformed doctrines were summoned to appear at St Andrews, before the Archbishop, on the 2nd day of February following, to answer for their conduct in usurping the sacred office, and disseminating heretical doctrines. Upon this, a deputation of the Protestants waited on the Queen-regent, and endeavoured to dissuade her from permitting the adoption of such violent measures; declaring, that after what had recently taken place in the instance of the martyr Mill, they were determined to attend and see justice done to their preachers, and that if the prosecution went on, there would be such a number present to witness it as had been rarely seen in Scotland. This declaration so far alarmed the Regent that she caused the trial to be postponed; at the same time summoning a convention of the nobility, to be held at Edinburgh on the 7th of March 1559, to advise upon the most proper measure for settling the religious differences by which the nation had been so long agitated; and, that these matters might be fully discussed, the primate, at her request, called a provincial council of the clergy, to meet in the same place on the 1st of March.

The convention of nobility and council of clergy met at the time appointed, and the Protestants having also assembled at Edinburgh, appointed commissioners to lay their representations before each of these bodies. To the council of clergy they gave in certain preliminary articles of reformation, in which they craved, that the religious service should be performed in the native tongue; that such as were unfit for the pastoral office should be removed from their benefices; that, in future, bishops should be admitted with the assent of the parishioners; and that measures should be adopted for preventing immoral and ignorant persons from being employed in ecclesiastical functions. It deserves to be noticed, that there was another paper laid before the council, drawn up by persons attached to the Romish Church, also "craving redress of several grievances complained of in the ecclesiastical administration of Scotland." This latter paper, indicating the existence of a reforming party within the Romish Church itself, gave a serious alarm to the council, and increased their determination to adopt strong and decisive measures at once. They accordingly ratified, in the strongest terms, all the controverted doctrines; ordered strict inquiry to be made after all such as

absented themselves from the celebration of mass; and threatened with excommunication all who should disseminate or adhere to the doctrines of the Reformation. A secret treaty, it appears, had been framed between the clergy and the Queen-regent, in which they engaged to raise a large sum of money to enable her to levy and maintain forces wherewith to overpower and suppress the Reformers.

The Protestant party becoming aware of this secret treaty, and perceiving the turn matters were now taking, broke off the negotiations in which they had been engaged, and left Edinburgh. They were no sooner gone than a proclamation was made at the market-cross, by order of the Queen-regent, "prohibiting any person from preaching or administering the sacraments without authority from the bishops; and commanding all the subjects to prepare to celebrate the ensuing feast of Easter, according to the rules of the Catholic Church." This proclamation the Protestants regarded as equivalent to a declaration of direct hostility against them and their religious belief; and perceived that they must either now take their stand, or prepare to abandon all that they held most sacred. They did not hesitate, but disregarded the proclamation, neglecting the superstitious and idolatrous rites of Popery, and worshipping God according to the directions contained in His own word, and the light of conscience. The Queen-regent had now advanced too far to retract; and, accordingly, Paul Methven, John Christison, William Harlaw, and John Willock, were summoned to stand trial before the Justiciary Court at Stirling, on the 10th of May 1559, for disregarding the proclamation, teaching heresy, and exciting seditious and tumults among the people.

Being reluctant to proceed to extremities, the Protestants sent the Earl of Glencairn and Sir Hugh Campbell of London, to wait on the Queen, and remonstrate against these violent proceedings; but she haughtily replied, "That maugre (in spite of) their hearts, and all that would take part with them, these ministers should be banished Scotland, though they preached as soundly as ever St Paul did." The deputation reminded her of the promises she had repeatedly made to protect them, to which she unblushingly replied, "That it became not subjects to burden their princes with promises, farther than they pleased to keep them." Roused, rather than intimidated, by this language, they answered, that if she violated the engagements she had come under to her subjects, they would regard themselves as absolved from their allegiance to her. This bold and resolute answer caused her to pause and resume her tone of simulated mildness, and at length she promised to

suspend the trial of the preachers, and take the whole affair into serious consideration.

That very night, according to Spotswood, after the departure of the deputation, the Queen received information that the town of Perth had embraced the reformed doctrines. Enraged to find all matters going so contrary to her wishes, she sent for Lord Ruthven, provost of that town, and commanded him to go immediately and suppress these innovations. To this he answered, "that he could make their persons and their goods subject to her, but had not power over their minds and consciences." She furiously exclaimed, "that he was too malapert [bold] to give her such an answer, and she would make both him and them repent it." In the same spirit of revenge, she broke the promise she had given to Glencairn and London, ordered the processes against the preachers to go on, and summoned them peremptorily to stand their trial at Stirling on the appointed day.

Affairs now swept rapidly forward to the crisis that had been long inevitable. The Protestant nobility and gentlemen determined to accompany their preachers to Stirling on the day appointed. The townsmen of Dundee, and those of Montrose, together with the chief inhabitants of Angus and Mearns, assembled at Perth; but before proceeding to Stirling, it was judged expedient to send Erskine of Dun before them, to assure the Queen of their peaceful dispositions, and that their only object was to join with their preachers in making a public confession of their faith, and to aid them in their just defence. The wily Queen against resorted to dissimulation; and succeeded in persuading Erskine to remain at Stirling, and to write to the assembled Protestants at Perth, requesting them to return to their houses, and promising that the trial should not proceed against the ministers. Some, confiding in the Queen-regent's promise, did return to their homes; but a considerable number, remembering her previous acts of treachery, remained at Perth, till they should see the issue. At this very important juncture the Protestant party received an accession of strength in the opportune arrival of John Knox in Scotland.

It has been already stated that he had returned to Geneva, after the discouraging letters which he received at Dieppe. But when he received a fresh invitation from the Lords of the Congregation, and farther learned in what extremities his Scottish reforming brethren were placed, he at once determined to hasten to his native country, and devote his life to the great and sacred cause of the Scottish Reformation. He was refused permission to journey through England; but taking shipping at Dieppe, he sailed to Leith, where he landed the 2nd of May 1559. □

Precious Psalms: 10. The Sin of Pride

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” (Psalm 10:4)

In a real sense pride was the original sin both of angels and mankind. Lucifer said in his rebellion, “I will be like the most High” (Isa.14:14). His bait in his deception of Eve was the promise, “ye shall be as gods” (Gen.3:5). Man swallowed the bait – and how difficult it is for him now to swallow his pride and return to the true and living God!

Stubborn

Here we find a good man who is suffering the oppression and persecution of the wicked. This psalm describes them in detail. One thing we learn is their *stubbornness*. Despite many warnings in providence and the pleadings of gospel ministers they refuse to seek the Lord; they remain as self-seeking as ever. Of these God says, “I called you, but ye answered not” (Jer.7:13). What a solemn thing to shut one’s ears to the voice which speaks from heaven!

Demeanour

Our generation is increasing in this foolish conceit and smugness. How proud we are of our cleverness, our discoveries, our sophistication: yet how ignorant we are in religion and morality! We are like the Jewish leaders who could discern the face of the sky but not the signs of the times (Matt.16:3). The divine judgments which we are witnessing should humble us to repentance; without grace we will harden ourselves. Beware, for a “proud look” is one of the things God hates (Prov.6:16,17).

Heart

A man’s face is really a reflection of what is in his *heart*. The wicked man’s mind is divorced from God and eternity, dwelling only on the things of time and sense. He makes his plans without God and he will not let the righteous stand in the way of his ambitions. Ungodly men have their reward now. Let us not envy them but pray for them, that God would soften their hearts to salvation. And, “He that glorieth, let him glory *in the Lord*” (1Cor.1:31). □

For Young People: *Birds of the Bible*

10. The Eagle – Bird of Strength

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles” (Isaiah 40:31)

The Bible has quite a lot to say about the eagle. The first mention is in the book of Exodus. Shortly after the Israelites left Egypt God reminded them just what had taken place. “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (Exod.19:4).

The deliverance of Israel from her cruel captivity was a work of God’s mighty providence. The people, men, women and children, were taken out of Egypt and through the Red sea as if each one of them was carried upon the wings of a great eagle!

This is a picture of the salvation of the church. God’s people are brought out of their slavery in sin by a work of God’s mighty grace. Grace is the favour of God which is shown to sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ. Each believer is picked up, borne aloft and brought home to heaven by God upon the eagles’ wings of free and sovereign grace!

We may see this majestic bird in our own land. The golden eagle is often seen flying high above the mountain peaks in the Scottish Highlands. It has great wings which may stretch seven feet from tip to tip. The wings of the rarer sea eagle are even longer.

When they are converted the Lord’s people become like eagles in a way. God’s grace enters their hearts and they get a spiritual life and strength which they knew nothing of before. They hear the voice of Christ and they rise up and follow him. United to Jesus by faith they begin to ‘fly’ like the eagle. How are they like this bird?

The eagle’s flight is a *powerful* flight. When its sharp claws seize its prey, often a hare and sometimes a weak lamb, the eagle is able to fly off with its load. Such is its strength that it can carry its prey right up to its nest high in a pine tree or on a mountainside.

When we become Christians we lose the old burden we have been carrying. We have sinned since our birth and the load has got heavier and heavier. We cannot do what God requires. You and I have many sins, but they will all be pardoned for the sake of Jesus if we truly repent of them. The Bible says, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom.5:20).

God's grace enables the Christian to bear afflictions. Walking with Christ the believer gets a new, different burden. The Bible calls it his "cross." It is anything that the believer suffers as he is faithful to his Lord. We must take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23). But how will we carry such a weight? Here is the answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Cor.12:9). Does not Jesus say, "my burden is light" (Matt.11:30)?

The eagle's flight is an *upward* flight. The eagle is known for its seemingly effortless, soaring progress in the skies. It flies "toward heaven" (Prov.23:5). It also has a sharp sight: "her eyes behold afar off" (Job 39:29). The eagle is able to look into the sun as it goes higher and higher.

God's grace enables the Christian to overcome sin in his life. This is our daily battle. The Word of God says: "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb.12:1,2). By grace the Christian is made holy and he gets nearer and nearer to God.

Is your eye upon Christ? He is the "Sun of righteousness" who shines from heaven in the gospel and gives blessings to sinners who look to him in faith (Mal.4:2). Look to him for strength to resist the devil and to keep you always in the paths of righteousness.

The eagle's flight is an *enduring* flight. Like other birds the eagle 'moult's' on occasion. Old feathers which may be damaged and hinder its flight are got rid of and new feathers grow in their place. In this way the eagle's youth is renewed (Psa.103:5). It is able to continue flying to the end of its days.

God's grace enables the Christian to persevere. All the way from our new birth to our death we must be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1Pet.1:5). We need to "wait upon the Lord" and receive fresh supplies of grace. We should read our Bibles, pray, meet with other believers and hear the gospel preached. Are we doing these things?

There is another wonderful thing about the eagle. As it rears its young it teaches them to fly. When the time comes for the young birds to leave the nest it supports them for a while with its own wings as they make their first attempts at flight, until they are able to fly for themselves.

This is just what godly parents do with their children. They train them up in the way they should go (Prov.22:6). They teach them to live by a personal faith in the Lord Jesus. Have you learned this? □

Gàidhlig: Is mise, eadhon mise, an Tighearna; agus a mach uamsa chaneil slanuidhear ann – Isaiah 41:13
(Seonaidh Mac’ill Eathainn)

Nuair a leughas sinn na sgrìobtuirean gu mionaideach bi sinn a’ togail Ìoma suidheachadh far am bheil daoine a’ cuir an uile dhòchas ann an diathan coimheach agus air an aobhar sin ri iodhal-aoradh. Tha seo gu math follaiseach anns an t-seann tiomnadh agus a rithis anns an tiomnadh-nuadh. Faodaidh sinn a’ radh gu bheil e na’r n’eachdraidh bho thùs. Nacheil e fìor anns an latha anns a’bheil sinn fhein beo gu bheil sinn èolach air moran chreidimhean a measg an t-saoghail a tha cleachdadh iodhalan agus modhan eadar-dhealaichte nan aoradh. Tha an cleachdadh seo na ghràineilachd do an Tighearn agus tha e air a dheanamh glè shoilleir dhuinn ann an faidheadaireachd Isaiah, caib 41:24; “feuch, is neo-ni sibh, agus is nì gun bhrìgh bhur n’obair: is gràineilachd esan a’ roghnaicheas sibh”. Tha eiseamplair eile air a’ chuir fa’r comhair ann an leabhar Jeremiah, caib 2:7 anns a, bheil an Tighearna a’ cuir an ceill pailteas a’ laimhe do chlann Israeil ach dh’aindeoin’s na rinn e dhoibh; “thruaill iad m’fhearann agus m’oighreachd rinn sibh n’a ghràineilachd”.

Is e aoradh aon doigh anns am bheil e comasach dhuinne a bhi cuir an ceill moladh agus ùmhlachd do’n Tighearna agus a bhi gabhail comh-pàirt ann an co-chomunn ris-san mar a tha E air ordugh leis anns an fhìrinn. Nach biodh e reusanta gum bitheamaide a’ dluthachadh ris an Tighearna agus ga fhaicinn-sa mar an aon Dia fìor agus ceart. Tha seo cho cudthromach do gach aon oir tha an fhìrinn ag innseadh dhuinn, ma tha sinn a’ dol a’ shealbhachadh na beatha maieannaich gum feum sinn an t-aite sin a’ thoirt dha agus sin tre an Tighearna Iosa Crìosd. Tha soilleireachd air a’ thoirt dhuinn ann an Soisgeul Eoin caib. 17:3; “agus is i seo a’ bheatha mhaireannach, èolas a bhi aca ortsa an aon Dia fìor, agus air Iosa Crìosd a’ chuir thu uait.”

Tha ‘ur ceann-teagaisg a’ cuir cùl ri dia sam bith eile ach an Tighearna Dia agus esan a’mhain. Tha sinn ri thuigsinn gur ann annsan a tha slainte shiorraidh ri fhaotainn; “agus a mach uamsa chaneil slanuidhear ann.” Tha fiosrachadh tha seo ag innseadh dhomhsa agus dhuitsa gu bheil sinn ann an suidheachadh anns am bheil sinn a’ cuir feum air Slanuidhear ma tha sinn fhathast na’r peacadh agus gun maitheanas peacaidh againn, is gun Chrìosd mar Fhear-Saoraidh. Chan urrainn dhuinn a’ dhol as aicheadh sin oir pheacaich gach aon againn ann am focal, smuain agus gnìomh. Mar sin, nach biodh e fragarrach gum bitheamaid a’ cuir ‘ur n’aghaidh air an Tighearna agus a’ cuir èolas pearsanta annsan chum is gum bitheamaid a’

sealabhachadh an dòchais mhaireannach sin nach toir ni air bi bhuan.

Dè do shuidheachadh fhein fa chomhair nam briathran a tha againn 'sa cheann-teagaisg?

Bheil thu fhathast am measg sluagh an t-saoghail mhòir agus do shùil agus do dhòchas ann an nithean na beatha seo a' thig gu cinnteach gu crìoch gun bhuanachd air bith?

Tha Dia a' labhairt riumsa agus riutsa. Gun gabhamaid ceum da ionnsaigh. □

Congregational News

Presbytery Fellowship

On Saturday 4th July the congregation hosted the Presbytery Fellowship which takes the form of a Question Meeting. The Question was proposed by Mr Ian Fraser and was from Malachi 4:2: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." The Question was opened by the Rev. Graeme Craig (Stornoway) and after five men had spoken the Question was closed by the Rev. Kenneth Macdonald (Scalpay). A lunch was served in Paible School. It was encouraging to have so many visitors from other congregations and it is hoped that another such meeting can be held in due course.

Congregational Fellowships

Our monthly fellowships this year are on the theme of 'Truth and Error' in which we are comparing the teachings of the major world religions and cults with the teachings of the Bible. The meetings are held in the manse after the Sabbath evening service and are open to all who are interested. At the meeting on July 12th we intend to look at Eastern Orthodoxy. On 23rd August we hope to look at Spiritualism. For more information visit our website: www.northuistandgrimsayfcc.org.uk

Library

A congregational library has been set up in the foyer of the church. At present there is a small collection of books and pamphlets on various subjects and also some DVDs on creation. The titles may be borrowed for as long as required and then returned (there is no need to sign them in or out). We would be interested to hear of any titles which you find particularly helpful. Please make use of this new facility. □

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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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