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The Storm

Rev Aaron Lewis

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Sri Lanka Mission Trip

A year ago, when our Sri Lankan divinity student Parthee told me of his coming wedding, he asked me if I would go to Sri Lanka to officiate at the ceremony. My initial thought was, No, it's just too far and also too expensive. However, on reflection, I decided to go. Parthee is likely to get married only once in his life, we had been very close over the last four years, he had been a great help to me and a blessing in my congregation, so I felt that if I didn't go I would regret it. I am so glad I decided to go. It was a blessed time. Having agreed to go to Sri Lanka I then felt that I should offer my services to the churches there.

The Island

Sri Lanka is an island a little smaller than Scotland. It is situated to the south of India and has a population of 20 million. The majority of the population are Sinhalese and traditionally Buddhist. About 20% of the population are Tamil and are mostly to be found in the north and east of the island. Traditionally they are Hindu. There had been a long running war in which the Tamils, complaining of inequalities, sought independence for themselves. This came to an end with the defeat of the so called Tamil Tigers. Parthee is from the Tamil community and from the city of Jaffna in the North. The Portuguese who were the first colonial masters brought with them the Roman Catholic Church which today claims over a million adherents. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch and eventually the British. The main Protestant churches are the Church of Ceylon which is Anglican, the Methodists, the Assemblies of God and the various other Pentecostal groups. In total the Protestant churches would number around 200,000 most of whom would be liberal and the rest charismatic.

Presbyterian Church in Colombo

In the year 2000 a Reformed and Presbyterian work was begun in the capital Colombo supported by Jurong Bible Presbyterian Church in Singapore. With excellent Reformed teaching the work grew rapidly. I visited and preached there in June 2001 on my way home from a preaching trip to Singapore and Australia. From this church Kerey and Parthee came to study with us in Scotland supported by our Missions Committee's Overseas Students' Scholarship Fund. Prior to Kerey coming we were asked if we could train Parthee's older brother Vijay. At that stage it was too soon for us as we were not sufficiently organised and he went instead to the Far East Bible College in Singapore.

Trinity RPC

Vijay is the minister of the church in Colombo which is now called Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church. It is financially supported by Jurong Bible Presbyterian Church and some Singaporeans come over from time to time to help in teaching and outreach. As well as the church in Colombo there is a mission work in Hatton in the tea-growing hill country, in Jaffna in the north and three outreach centres in Trincomalee in the east. One of these in the city of Trincomalee is run by Kerey. The other two are in villages near the city. The churches are hymn-singing and would have a lower view of the Sabbath than we would have. During his time in Scotland Parthee became convinced of purity of worship and the Puritan Sabbath. Because of fear that he might be a divisive influence Trinity RPC were not prepared to welcome him back as a pastor and that is why we find ourselves involved in starting a separate work there.

Offer to Preach

Vijay has worshipped with us in Glasgow and so I offered my services to the church there for two weeks when I would be in Sri Lanka for the wedding – the 8th to the 22nd of December. This was warmly welcomed. Soon a programme was drawn up for me which included 14 lectures on 'The Christian Family and Service' to be delivered at the Logos Bible College in Vavuniya. This College provides a week-long course of lectures (in my case Tuesday to Thursday) once every month for pastors, church leaders and Sunday school teachers. Many pastors in rural areas have little or no ministerial training. Considerable preparation work was required for these fourteen lectures. I had to send my lecture notes to them before leaving Scotland. I was also asked to prepare for a two-hour Bible study on the second coming of Christ and sermons on various other subjects such as the atonement and prayer. I found that when I arrived in Sri Lanka much more was required. However I felt wonderfully upheld by the prayers of God's people. Tiredness didn't hit me till I returned home.

Arrival

I arrived in Colombo at 8.30am on Thursday 8th December after having travelled with Emirates Airlines from Glasgow via Dubai. For my first assignment I was asked to speak the next day as the special guest at the Kindergarten Graduation. Around 40 children attend the school which is run on the church premises and their ages are between three and six years. Along with their parents, teachers and well-wishers from the church there were some 120 present. The children did various plays, sang songs and then I addressed them on the Parable of the Sower, stressing the importance of retaining the Christian truths which they were taught. I spoke in English as it is an English-medium kindergarten. Apart from the wedding service all the rest of my addresses were through an interpreter. On the Saturday I was asked to speak to the youths in the church on 'Man's Chief End'. There were about 20 present and they listened attentively. The pastor Vijay interpreted for me as he did for the rest of my lectures and sermons. He has excellent English and appeared a godly and dedicated man with whom I quickly developed a deep bond of fellowship and love.

On the first Sabbath I preached on marks of grace and the need to search our hearts as to whether we really are

Above: Colombo pastor Vijay and his wife, the Editor, Parthee's mother, his wife Dino, his sister & her daughter, and her husband Dinesh.

Christians or not. It was also the occasion of the closing of the Sabbath School for the session. With extra parents present and some folk who had not been to church before the attendance was around 100. After the service sweet tea and cake were served in the church courtyard.

Logos Bible College

On the Monday afternoon about 3pm Vijay and I set off on the long drive to Vavuniya. Due to road works and torrential rain, (and getting lost in a town on the way!) we did not arrive till 11.30pm. Our accommodation was at a rather pretty hotel where we were very well looked after. Next morning we went to a rather rough church building (a roof and half walls) where the Logos Bible College is held. Over the next three days I delivered my 14 lectures on the allocated topic 'The Christian Family and Service'. Subjects covered included 'The Origin of Man','The Origin of Marriage', 'The Sabbath', 'The Christian Home' 'The Upbringing of Children', 'Divorce and Remarriage' and 'The Christian's Service'. Opportunity was given at the end of each lecture for questions to be asked and at the end an assignment was set for the students based on what was taught. On Thursday evening we drove back to Colombo, arriving late.

Colombo Again

It was good to meet Murray Mackay from Partick in Colombo. He was to be Parthee's Scottish best man. He also had a Sri Lankan one. On the Friday morning Murray and I were up at 5am to visit the fish market. It was absolutely enormous and had fish of every shape and size. We enjoyed curried crab and cuttlefish for lunch. Friday is the day for the midweek prayer meeting and Bible study. I was asked to address the congregation on the subject of prayer and spoke from Matthew 6, especially referring to the Lord's Prayer.

Hatton Mission

Saturday morning we were up at 4.30am and set off for the Hatton Mission in the hill country where the tea plantations are. By this stage James Boyd and Ian Bannerman from Knightswood had joined us. The scenery was stunning – the most beautiful I have seen anywhere in the world. Some of the early tea planters were Scots and so we noticed plantations with such names as Edinburgh and Inverness. We dropped the Scottish boys off at the foot of Adam's peak, a high mountain which they hoped to climb. There is a legend that the Garden of Eden was in Sri Lanka. At the top of the mountain there is a large sort of footprint in the rock which is supposed to be Adam's footprint but the Buddhists say it is Buddha's footprint. The Hindus believe it was that of one of their gods. That afternoon I addressed a Bible Study at the home of the Hatton evangelist Jeyamoorthy. I had been asked to speak on the Second Coming. The house was crowded and they listened intently for almost two hours.

On the Sabbath morning I was asked to officiate at the sacrament of the Lord's supper and to preach on the atonement and sufferings of Christ. I spoke on 1 Peter 2:24 'Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed'. Including children there must have been some fifty or sixty present. In the evening I preached an evangelistic sermon on 'The Thief on the Cross' at a church a few miles away. There would have been around thirty to forty there. It was a solemn occasion. After each service it is customary to serve sweet tea and cake.

Beautiful Scenery

Monday was spent travelling back to Colombo by the scenic route. The waterfalls, rivers, mountains, valleys and neatly kept tea bushes everywhere make a spectacular scene. We visited a dairy farm, a rose garden and a tea factory. The roads are inadequate for the traffic on them and so progress is slow. Driving appears to us very reckless with much use of the horn and overtaking on any side where there is enough room to squeeze through. Buses happily travel on the wrong side of the road blaring their horns for cars to get out of their way. In my two weeks I witnessed three accidents with men knocked off motor bikes. Life appears cheap. The beautiful scenery is marred by temples and shrines to false gods.

The Wedding

Tuesday was the wedding day. It began with Kerey, who had been our first student in Scotland, taking me out for breakfast at 8am to a hotel nearby. He had come to Colombo for the wedding. It was great to meet up with him again and hear his news. He is working in the city of Trincomalee. He has been there for a couple of years now and is finding it hard going. As in any city it is difficult to make contact with new people and particularly to persuade them to attend church. About twenty to thirty attend his services. Attempts are made through Sabbath-school work to reach parents. Printed invitations to special services are handed out. His problems are similar to those faced by all of us. He has not lost his English and appears cheerful and enjoying his work. It was good to meet his wife and lovely daughter Jemima.

At 9.30am a wedding rehearsal was held and this was especially necessary as customs in Sri Lanka are different. The large church building, which is seldom used because they have a suitable smaller hall in the new complex, had been beautifully painted by Parthee and some friends. The service went well and Dinoge looked beautiful in her white wedding dress. Half way through the reception, as is customary there, she changed into a red sari. The wedding meal was buffet style with a choice of delicious curries – beef, chicken and fish. If you do not like curry for breakfast, dinner and tea, you might have difficulty in Sri Lanka! The evening was spent chatting while the very professional team of five photographers took group photos of the various guests along with Parthee and Dino.

Last day

Wednesday was my last day but it was as busy as the rest. At 8am I was taken out to a restaurant for breakfast, vegetarian curry, by two of the pastors/evangelists, Jeyamoorthy who is in charge of the work at Hatton and Vijenderan who leads two of the churches in Trincomalee. They are fine men. It was a pleasure to be with them and meet their wives also. Their English was reasonable but I did wish I could communicate with them in their own language. What a curse the tower of Babel has been! At around 9.30am I addressed the church workers who had gathered from the different parts of the country for Parthee's wedding. My subject was backsliding and I spoke on the particular dangers which those who are involved full-time in the work of God face. They listened attentively. Later we went to a restaurant with most of the congregation for a meal to mark the leaving of Donald Devaparan, a fine deacon who is emigrating with his family to Canada. On that final day we fitted in a swim in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka has beautiful beaches. Finally we called at the Colombo zoo and enjoyed seeing performing elephants. At around 11pm Vijay gave me a big hug and I set off for the airport along with Parthee and his friend Ranjan. I arrived back in Glasgow on the Thursday at midday – needing a holiday but having to prepare for the Sabbath!

Conclusion

Sri Lanka is a great mission field for us. There are many villages where there is no gospel church. Such preaching as there is tends to be very superficial and Arminian. Solid Reformed preaching is very rare. God has opened for us a door in that strategic country. He has given to us a local man who knows the language and culture and is thoroughly committed to the Reformed faith and the great truths which we hold dear. Remember Sri Lanka in your prayers and especially Parthee as he seeks God's guidance as to where he should seek to plant a church and how he should go about the work. Pray for him as he makes use of the opportunities which present themselves to him. Humanly speaking he is faced with an overwhelming task but God is able and we look to Him to do great things. As a Church we have committed a legacy left by Kenny MacPherson (Staffin) to provide a salary for Parthee for the next three years. Donations made to the Church and marked for Sri Lanka will be allocated to the furtherance of that work.

Former FCC Seminary Student Rev Kerey Thayananth, with daughter Jemima

Do We Profit From Our Congregational Worship?

Excerpt from John Calvin's sermon on 1 Corinthians 11:17-19, translated by Rev J Clark.

We must consider why it is the Lord's will that the church gathers together, that there be an appointed place, a sanctuary designated for the calling upon His Name and the preaching of His Word.... There must be some purpose, that whatever God has established among us may serve and be useful for our salvation. No-one should be returning home without having obtained some good from the service of worship.... We come here to hear the Word of God, we offer prayers for and with each other, and we partake of the sacraments. Afterwards, each of us in our own homes should have some knowledge of what to do to practise our Christianity. We must not at all think that we have discharged our duty before God because we have heard the sermon each week, prayed in the company of believers, professed our faith and participated in the sacraments. We must not, I repeat, be deceived into thinking that God is entirely satisfied if we have done these things. But we must consider the end and usefulness of these things; are we profited by being daily confirmed in the fear of God and in the growth of our faith? To summarise, we must demonstrate that it is not in vain that we have attended the school of our God, for it is indeed to profane the doctrine we hear if we continue in the same condition as we were before [we heard it].

...When the church bell rings and we come to hear the Word of God, when we come in the same accustomed condition as before and no perceptible change has taken place, when we continue going along in our own earthly-mindedness, is that not a profanation of the Word of God? Why? Because we make it ineffective in our lives. For when it should change us into the holiness of God (since it is the mirror in which we contemplate His face in order to be transformed, 2Cor.3:18), and when we should be delighted with that doctrine which is the seed of life and nourishment of our souls, it nevertheless gives us no benefit at all. We trample it underfoot, being blatantly indifferent to it. When we heard it, it entered one ear and came out the other, and no trace of it remains in our hearts. It has no root in us and thus no efficacy.

This is a great and intolerable vice. The result is that we assemble in worship and our lives do not show any appearance of improvement. We act as if we had never heard a single word nor had been instructed regarding the will of God. If we are no different from those miserable people who have received no instruction, do we not thereby show that we have mocked God every time we have come to the sanctuary in His Name? It is blatant hypocrisy and duplicity if we claim that when we come to hear His Word it is to offer ourselves to God in sacrifice (Rom.12:1), and yet depart without being improved by it at all!'

What Advice Would You Give to a **Young** Pastor Just Getting Started?

Dr Joel R. Beeke

Recently Dr Beeke completed 25 years as pastor in Grand Rapids, Michigan and we congratulate him on the occasion. He was asked various questions in a recent interview to mark the occasion. His answer to the above question we felt was particularly helpful.

Here are eleven quick pieces of advice:

1. Pray, pray, pray. Never undertake any church duty without salting it with prayer. Remember John Bunyan's advice, 'You can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you can't do more than pray until you've prayed'.

2. Study, study, study. Live on the growing edge of truth in your study. Keep up your Hebrew and Greek. Prepare your sermons thoroughly. Write some articles or a few books for personal enrichment. Attend some of the many worthwhile conferences and seminars held in many locales today. Go back to seminary for further study. Enjoy the stimulation of working at a level that stretches your mind.

3. Preach, preach, preach. Spend the best energy of your life, like Paul, preaching Jesus Christ (1 Cor.2:2). Preach often. And when you do, preach biblically, doctrinally, experientially, and practically. Preach with passion, holding out the Word of life 'as a dying man to dying men'.

4. Model, model, model. Model biblical truth in the presence of your wife, your family, your church office-bearers, your congregation, and your neighbours. Resolve, as did Thomas Boston, to leave behind the savour of Christ wherever you go. Like Robert Murray M'Cheyne, pray that the Holy Spirit might make you as holy on earth as a pardoned sinner can be. Pray that your life might be a 'living epistle', your sermons written out in flesh and blood.

5. Delegate, delegate, delegate. Don't teach every class in your church. Don't take care of the bulletin. Don't micro-manage. Delegate as many things as possible so that you can focus on prayer, preaching, teaching, and the cure of souls.

6. Train, train, train. Train your people for roles of leadership in various church ministries. Spend extra time with young men who might serve as future elders and deacons, or as leaders of different outreaches. By the Spirit's grace, 'grow' future leaders. As you train them, give them freedom to use their gifts and chart their vision as much as possible. All such time will be well spent.

7. Visit, visit, visit. Visit your flock faithfully-in the hospital, at home, and in every time of need. Be there when they need you. Always read the Word and speak a few edifying words about it, as well as pray, at every visit. Fail here and you will

fail in all.

8. Love, love, love. Many ministers fail because they neglect to love their sheep. Love and keep loving your people for who they are, not for who you think they should be. Accept them as they are and where they are, and work with them from that point, always being patient with them, remembering that if you cannot connect in a loving way with people where they are, you will eventually be rejected by them. Regard yourself as the spiritual guardian and caretaker of a large family. Show kindness to everyone. Let them feel your concern for themselves and their extended families. Ask caring questions. Shower them with compassion when they are in need. As your relationship grows, whenever it is proper, don't be afraid to tell them that you love them. And if you have enemies in the church, go out of the way to love them, too, as Jesus commanded.

9. Enjoy, enjoy, enjoy. Count it an incredible honour and joy that you are God's ambassador. Edward Payson (1783-1827) said that he often clapped his hands for joy while in his private study because God had called him into the sacred ministry of His Word. The work of the ministry is a heavy task, but it is also a joyous task. Let the joy of the Lord, in Christ, be your strength (Neh.8:10).

10. Renew, renew, renew. Take care of the caregiver. Live near to God, feed on Christ, drink deeply of the Spirit. Take time out to rest, to lay aside all burdens, and to open yourself to the light of the Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Remember that you are only a receptacle or vessel, not the fountain of living waters. You cannot give to others what you have not first of all gathered for yourself.

11. Persevere, persevere, persevere. When troubles come and enemies pursue, don't be a hireling that abandons the sheep. Persevere in caring for them. Stay the course. Trust Ecclesiastes 11:1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days'.

The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth, November 2011

Obituary - John MacPherson

John MacPherson was born into the family of Kenneth and Marion MacPherson at Kilmuir, Isle of Skye, on 5th February 1915. His early life was spent in Kilmuir with his two brothers and a sister. After leaving school he went to Glasgow where he worked as a tram driver.

When the war broke out in 1939, John was called up and served in the Royal Navy. He was involved in the North Atlantic patrols and escorting convoys to Russia. During this time he suffered an experience where he was very near death, having to be rushed to hospital in Inverness with appendicitis and peritonitis. While in hospital Psalm 130 become precious to him.

After the war he returned to Kilmuir. In 1948 he married Katie MacLeod. They moved to Portree where John worked for the building firm French, the Storr Lochs Hydro Scheme and at the Co-op furniture store.

They were married for almost 60 years, until Katie passed to be with the Lord on 12th January 2008.

John MacPherson was a spiritually-minded man of conviction and prayer. His spiritual awakening he attributed to a sermon preached by Rev Kenneth MacRae on the text 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by' (Luke 18:37) at the Snizort Communion season in July 1935. He was brought to the liberty of the gospel through a sermon preached by Rev Norman Campbell, Dingwall on the text 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love' (Jeremiah 31:3) at the Staffin Communion season in June 1936. He professed faith publicly for the first time on the second Sabbath of August 1936 at the Kilmuir Communion.

John loved the Communion seasons and was a frequent and edifying speaker at the Friday Question meetings. He served the Lord as an Elder in Portree and Kilmuir and Stenscholl, and as a preacher of the glad tidings of the gospel for over 30 years.

He passed to his eternal rest on 15th October 2011 aged 96, and is greatly missed by the congregation at Portree. He is survived by his two daughters Robina and Nina. We extend to them, along with his sons-in-law Ewen and David, and his grandchildren Iain, Stephen, Alison and Peter, our prayerful condolences.

'*The memory of the just is blessed*' (Proverbs 10:7).

Rev Richard Ross

Children in St Kilda

Rev Anthony R Dallison, Virginia, USA

I have recently been reading an account of a visit which was paid to the lonely Atlantic island of St Kilda by the Rev Dr John MacDonald, minister of Ferintosh in the Black Isle in the early nineteenth century. He was popularly known as the 'Apostle of the North' because of his wide-ranging ministry throughout the Highlands and Islands. Part of the account of one of his visits I have given below, because it shows how at their mother's house and in the day schools and Sabbath schools the children of the community were thoroughly instructed from the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. It shows a depth of understanding and a grasp of Scripture which we ought to envy today.

Dr MacDonald on this occasion examined the children, without prior warning, on the seventh chapter of Luke:

'On what message did John the Baptist send his disciples to Christ? A boy of about fourteen replies, 'To enquire if He was the person who was to come'. 'What do you mean by the person who was to come?' 'The promised Saviour', says he. 'And what reply did Christ give them?' 'He was working miracles at the time, and He bade them go, and tell John the things they had seen'. 'How did the miracles which He had wrought prove that this was He that was to come?' 'Because', replies another boy, 'none but God could do these things and none, except God was with him'. 'But did not others work miracles as well as Christ?' 'Yes', replied the first boy, 'but not in their own strength: Christ wrought them by His own power'.

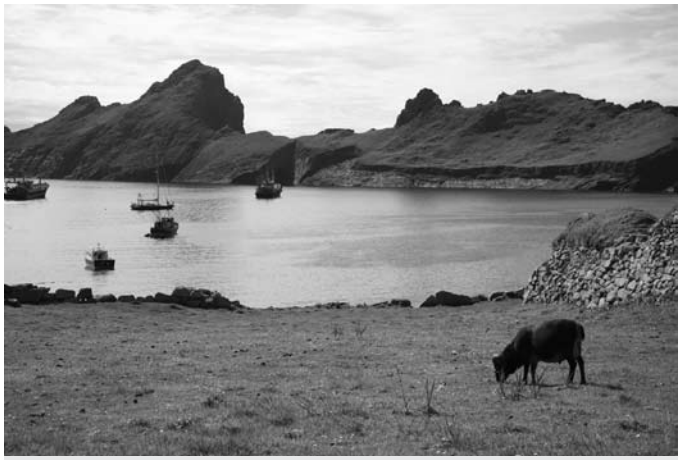
Who is Christ?' 'The Son of God', replies a third boy. 'For what purpose did He come into the world?' 'To save sinners', says he. 'What does He save sinners from?' 'He saves them from sin and wrath', says a fourth. 'How has He brought about the salvation of them?' 'By his death', replies he. 'How many natures has Christ?' 'Two', answered a fifth boy, 'the nature of God and the nature of man'. 'In which of these natures did He die?' 'In the nature of man', says he: 'God could not die'. 'Of what use, then, was the divine nature in Him?' After some pause, for the question seemed to stagger them, one of the girls replied, 'He would not be able to save us unless He were God'. Another girl adds, 'And, besides, it supported His human nature under suffering'. 'Oh yes', says a boy of about thirteen, 'and gave value to these sufferings', (literally, as expressed by him in his own language (Gaelic), 'put merit into these sufferings').

'Whether did the Pharisee or the woman of whom we read in this Chapter, love the Redeemer most?' 'The woman', replied the boy. 'How so, seeing the Pharisee made a feast for Him?' 'He did so', replied one of the senior girls, 'to be seen of men and that the Redeemer might have a good opinion of him, but not from love; but the woman wept and washed His feet with her tears, and wiped

them with her hair. Was not this love?' 'What made her weep?' 'Her sins', replied a little girl, I suppose about ten. 'How do you prove that her sins, sitting as she was at the Saviour's feet, were the cause of her weeping?' 'Yes', replies the first boy, 'you told us yourself lately when preaching from Zechariah 12:10, that a sight of Christ whom we have pierced, would make us weep'. This boy had scarcely done when another, a little older than he, added, 'The love of Christ, too, made her weep'. 'Ah, yes, says an aged man, one of the parents, 'the love of Christ, that indeed melts the heart'. Thus ended the exercise and, after delivering a short address to the children and parents, I concluded the whole with prayer.

You will agree with me when I say that this account, part of which I have given above, opens a shaft of light on to a well-nigh forgotten and neglected facet of our national religious heritage, the thorough instruction of our children in the truths of Scripture and the Shorter Catechism. Many of the questions put to these children one hundred and fifty years ago, the majority of our adults today could not answer correctly.

If only we, and our society, realized it, the greatest possession we have is still the Bible, known, loved, read and memorised, adequate for our every need in 2011 as it was long years ago when the 'Apostle of the North' visited the storm-swept, lonely isle of St Kilda. If we know our Bibles, as these children of long ago knew theirs, we will increasingly be prepared for life here and the glorious 'hereafter', where doubtless some of them are now, with the beloved Lord Jesus.

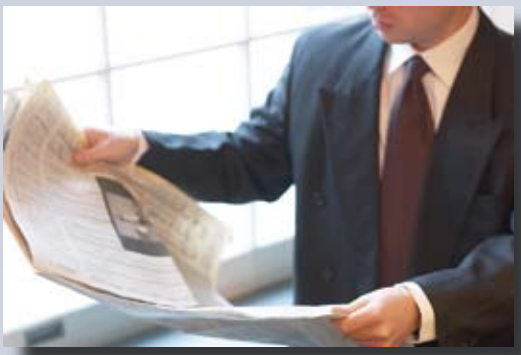


Many of the questions put to these children one hundred and fifty years ago, the majority of our adults today could not answer correctly.

Congregational Remittances - January 2012

	2012 Jan	2012 Total	2011 Total to Jan
Presbytery of Inverness			
Aberdeen	900	900	900
Duthil-Dores	1496	1,496	1,430
Inverness	2000	2,000	2,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	0	0	1,400
Total Inverness	**4396**	**4,396**	**5,730**
Northern Presbytery			
Assynt & Scourie	0	0	0
Brora	500	500	0
Kiltearn	0	0	0
Tarbat	0	0	0
Total Northern	**500**	**500**	**0**
Southern Presbytery			
Arran	948	948	806
Ayr	0	0	0
Dumfries	0	0	0
Edinburgh	0	0	0
Glasgow - Partick	2000	2,000	2,000
Glasgow - Shettleston	2100	2,100	2,000
Glasgow - Knightswood	1500	1,500	0
Rothesay	0	0	0
Total Southern	**6548**	**6,548**	**4,806**

Outer Hebrides Presbytery			
Cross	2239	2,239	1,865
Harris - Leverburgh	1150	1,150	1,100
Harris - Scalpay	1800	1,800	1,700
Knock & Point	1150	1,150	1,125
North Uist	1,000	1,000	1,000
Stornoway	5934	5,934	7,928
Total Outer Hebrides	**13,273**	**13,273**	**14,718**
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron			
Bracadale	1000	1,000	1,000
Duirinish (Waternish)	500	500	715
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	1300	1,300	1,300
Lochalsh	150	150	150
Poolewe & Aultbea	550	550	520
Ullapool	0	0	0
Portree	1400	1,400	1,200
Snizort	1200	1,200	1,200
Strath	400	400	30
Total Skye	**6500**	**6,500**	**6,115**
Total Congregations	**31,217**	**31,217**	**31,369**
Other Donations	3,008	3,008	3,997
Legacy	0	0	0
TOTAL	**34,225**	**34,225**	**35,366**
Including Gift Aid		0	0



News

Arbroath Weekend, October 2011

D R Morrison

It was that time of year again. On the weekend of the 15th of October, a good number of the youth of the FCC and several other denominations gathered in Arbroath for the FCC Youth Weekend. Our speaker this time was the Rev Kenneth Macdonald of Scalpay, and his topic was 'Thy Kingdom Come'. He explained that the Kingdom of Heaven had a future and a present aspect, and focused on the Kingdom as it is here on earth. In his own words 'it is not that it has to do with heaven, rather that it originates from heaven'. Mr Macdonald then went on to talk about how the Kingdom must have a King, and how we, as his Kingdom's subjects, must live every part of our lives as if Christ was our ruler. He finished by talking of the security of the Kingdom's subjects, and then of the warfare they must fight here on earth: the Kingdom of Heaven against the world, the flesh and the Devil, and how, with Christ's help, we must fight the world in all its forms. It was a series of talks which were very appropriate in this day and age and were a great encouragement to me personally, as I am sure they were to all who attended. Between the talks, we had

Desk

fantastic meals (thank you to the cooks!) and excellent fun. Most importantly, we had great fellowship. We have to thank the organizer, Nathan Roberts, the speaker, Mr Macdonald, the cooks Isobel McQueer and Myra MacLean, and, most importantly, we have to thank the Lord, whose mercies to us are uncountable.

Survey of American Christianity

One survey conducted by the Barna Group found that very few Americans between the ages of 18 and 23 hold a Biblical worldview. The Barna Group asked participants in the survey if they agreed with the following six basic statements:

1) I believe that absolute moral truth exists.

2) I believe that the Bible is completely accurate in all of the principles it teaches.

3) I believe that Satan is a real being, not merely symbolic.

4) I believe that a person cannot earn his way into Heaven by trying to be good or by doing good works.

5) I believe that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth.

6) I believe that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the world who still rules the universe today.

Less than 1% of the participants agreed with all of those statements. To me that is staggering. While the Barna Group's research methods and some of the conclusions can be questioned, this survey indicates a serious situation. Sometimes figures are quoted which suggest that some 50% of Americans would claim to be born again but this shows the reality of the situation.

Encouraging Givings

Angus Macmillan, General Treasurer

Remittances received by headquarters from congregations for the year 2011 (including total Gift Aid tax reclaimed of £98,058) amount to £602,303 which is up by £20,751 (4%) on last year.

If all Gift Aid tax reclaims are excluded from the figures then the comparison to last year of remittances received directly from congregations of £504,244 shows an increase of £13,783 (3%) for the year.

We have much to be thankful for to the Lord who continues to provide for our Church each year. Let us praise and thank Him for his goodness to us.

Mayor Tom Wilson with wife Sonya and Dan Byles MP

Babies with three genetic parents

Christian Institute

Babies with three genetic parents could be born within a few years, as the Government has announced plans for a consultation on changing embryology rules. The Government says the controversial technique may help avoid certain genetic diseases being passed on from mother to child. But critics say there are serious ethical considerations and the experiments may have harmful unintended consequences.

In 2008 Parliament passed an embryology bill that gave government ministers the power to introduce regulations allowing three-parent embryos. The Department of Health has announced plans to hold a consultation on such regulations. Josephine Quintavalle, of the pro-life group Comment on Reproductive Ethics, cautioned: 'Mitochondrial disease is obviously serious and worrying but it does not merit experimenting on humans and unleashing who-knows-what on the next generation. It's like we've written off the laws of nature'.

Mayor found in breach of equality rules

Christian Institute

A church-going former mayor in Warwickshire who declined to take part in a Halloween event has been found in breach of equality rules for upsetting pagans. Tom Wilson, who is a member at Manor Court Baptist Church in Nuneaton, said he believed Halloween was a 'pagan festival' and that he did not want to be associated with it. But his comments, in 2009, were attacked by pagans who complained to Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council. Now the former mayor has been officially reprimanded for the comments and been instructed to make a written apology in the press. The ex-mayor, who is still a councillor at the Council, said: 'I feel the punishment is harsh and I feel it has been a dreadful waste of time and money. This happened nearly two years and five months ago and I hate to think how much money it has cost the council taxpayers'.

He commented that he had 'not received a single complaint by letter, text or email from a single person since then'.

The issue arose in 2009 when Mayor Wilson declined an invitation to judge

a pumpkin carving competition in the town centre. He said at the time: 'Halloween is a pagan festival. It glorifies Satan's angels and celebrates the dark side. I do not think it is appropriate to involve young people in this sort of thing and it is not something I want to be associated with'. Pagans complained to the Council, saying his remarks were 'inaccurate and likely to cause distress'.

It is sad to see this in a supposedly-Christian country like our own.

Use of *Sharia* 'courts' is increasing

Christian Institute

Sadakat Kadri called for the existence of Sharia courts to be acknowledged

The use of *Sharia* 'courts' is on the increase in Britain with thousands using Islamic law to settle disputes, according to the BBC. The news comes as a leading barrister claims that *Sharia* law is compatible with human rights, and beneficial to communities. However, critics say the courts discriminate against women and should not operate as a parallel legal system. A Bill has been brought before the House of Lords by Christian humanitarian, Baroness Cox, to curb the growth of *Sharia* courts. Sheikh Haitham al-Haddad, a representative of the Islamic *Sharia* Council at Leyton, told BBC Asian Network that his caseload at the east London council had 'easily more than tripled' over the past three to five years – dealing with up to 300 disputes a month.

A leading barrister, Sadakat Kadri, a Harvard Law School contemporary of Barack Obama, called for the UK to become more *Sharia*-literate. Regarding *Sharia* law councils, Mr Kadri said: 'It's very important that they be acknowledged and allowed to exist'. He also told the *Guardian* that the courts were good for 'the community as a whole'.

In 2009, think-tank Civitas reported that an estimated 85 *Sharia* councils could be operating in Britain. But *Sharia* opponents believe it discriminates against women as well as rulings falsely claiming legal jurisdiction over criminal and family law.

Last year Baroness Cox introduced the Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill to the House of Lords, which aims to tackle discrimination suffered by Muslim women under *Sharia* law.

Baroness Cox led the fight against Sharia Law

Laws based on our Christian heritage provide protection for all. We must beware of being taken over by Islam in one way or another.

Indian Christians Targeted

Barnabas Fund

Indian Christians were targeted in 140 major incidents of violence in 2011, including murders, assaults, arson attacks and the destruction of property. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) recorded the anti-Christian attacks in its annual persecution report. Many of the incidents involved violence by Hindu extremists who accused local Christians of forcibly converting Hindus. And often the authorities, rather than pursuing the aggressors, took action against the Christian victims.

The southern state of Karnataka was the worst affected with over a third (49) of the attacks taking place there. In one of the incidents, around 20 Hindu extremists disrupted a Sunday service that was taking place in the home of a Christian in Bagalkot, Mudhol, on 21st August. They attacked the congregation and desecrated the communion bread and wine. They beat up the pastor, who received severe injuries to his face and lost a tooth, dragged him out of the house and tied him to a tree. The police were called to the scene and detained the pastor and some other believers; the pastor was later charged.

Elsewhere, in Orissa state, three Christians were found dead in suspicious circumstances in separate incidents during the year. Saul Pradhan (45), a church pastor in Kandhamal, was discovered on 11th January; his body bore marks of assault, but the police claimed that he had died as a result of the cold. The family of Michael Digal (43), who went missing and was found dead three days later on 27th July, believe that he was killed because he had testified in a court case related to the anti-Christian attacks in the district in 2008. Then on 6th November, Ganga Pallia (22) was found murdered in Cuttack; he is believed to have been killed by Hindu extremists.

In Dhantulsi, Chhattisgarh state, around 60 Hindu extremists sabotaged a Christian couple's wedding day on 2nd July; they barged into the reception and beat several guests including women and children, ruined the food and torched vehicles. The Christians reported the incident to the police, but they refused to take any action and pressured the victims to withdraw their complaint.

On 28th October, a Christian man was sentenced to three years in prison for accidentally pasting a poster advertising an evangelistic mission over another religious poster. This riled local people, who staged a protest and created a roadblock. The Christian, Burgula Prasad of Khamman district, Andhra Pradesh state, was summoned to the police station, where he apologised for his unintended offence. He was initially released, but a criminal case was later filed against him.

The EFI called on state governments, especially that of Karnataka, to take immediate steps to ensure the protection of Christian minorities. They also asked for false and malicious cases registered against Christians in Karnataka to be dropped.

Remember our fellow-Christians in India in your prayers.

Christian Woman in Pakistan escapes Captors

Barnabas Fund

A young Christian woman in Pakistan who was kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam and married to her Muslim abductor has escaped after more than ten years in captivity.

Nadia Naira was aged 15 when she was seized at gunpoint by a Muslim man on 11th February 2001, from Mariamabad village in the district of Sheikhupura, Punjab province. She said: 'After two days of my kidnapping, [he] without my consent and at gunpoint forcibly converted me into Islam and I was given a Muslim name as Ayesha. Later he forcibly conducted a Muslim *Nikha* (marriage) and again he did not bother to ask for my free will'. Nadia's parents immediately reported the incident to the police, but though officers registered a case against the accused, they refused to arrest him. The family then took the matter before the Lahore High Court.

Nadia was threatened by her 'husband' that if she made a statement against him, he would kill both her and her parents. Fearing for their safety, Nadia told the judge that she had not been kidnapped and had embraced both Islam and her husband of her own free will. Thus Nadia was cut off from her family and trapped with the man, who already had a wife and ten children. He became violent towards her and was a drug addict. She gave birth to five of his children, now aged between nine years and six months old.

On 30th November 2011, Nadia eventually managed to escape and went back to her parents. Her husband, along with six accomplices, came and demanded she be returned to him. They threatened the family with death and also that they would kidnap Nadia's younger sisters if she was not returned. The distressed family sought help on 16th January from CLAAS, a Pakistani Christian legal organisation supported by Barnabas Fund, who immediately provided shelter for Nadia and one of her younger sisters. They also filed a criminal case against her husband and his accomplices.

The abduction, forced conversion and marriage of Christian girls is an all too common scenario in Pakistan; it is estimated that there are over 700 cases of abduction and forced marriage of Christian girls to Muslim men every year. The violations are often carried out by influential Muslim families, who threaten and severely beat the young girls to frighten them into compliance. The authorities rarely take action, and often the young girls never return to their families unless they manage to escape their captors.

Remember the Christian families of Pakistan in your prayers.

Christians flee Northern Nigeria

Barnabas Fund

Hundreds of Christians are leaving their homes in Northern Nigeria as militant Islamist group Boko Haram continues to wage its deadly campaign against them.

Four Christian men were reportedly shot dead in Potiskum town, Yobe State, on 11th January as they were travelling southwards to join their families who had already migrated to escape the violence. Entire lorry-loads of Christians are reported to be leaving Yobe following Boko Haram's ultimatum for Christians to quit the North and subsequent attacks against them. One Christian said that he is helping over 200 Christian families with relocation.

On 10th January, eight men and a woman – all thought to have been Christians – were gunned down in Potiskum. In the same town on the previous day, two Christians escaped unharmed by falling to the ground and playing dead as gunmen on a motorbike shot at them.

Christians are also leaving Maiduguri, Boko Haram's spiritual homeland in Borno State, following attacks against them there.

O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end

O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;
Be thou forever near me, my Master and my Friend.
I shall not fear the battle if thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway if thou wilt be my guide.

O let me feel thee near me! The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me, around me and within;
But Jesus, draw thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear thee speaking in accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will.
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen, thou guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, thou hast promised to all who follow thee
That where thou art in glory there shall thy servant be.
And Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.

O let me see thy footprints, and in them plant mine own;
My hope to follow duly is in thy strength alone.
O guide me, call me, draw me, uphold me to the end;
And then in Heaven receive me, my Saviour and my Friend.

John E Bode

On the day that the group's three-day ultimatum for Christians to leave the North expired, 4th January, a Christian family was attacked in their home in Maiduguri. Ousman Adurkwa (65) was shot dead along with his son Moussa. The gunmen fired at his other son Hyeladi, but the young man's mother took the bullet. She survived the attack. The family's neighbour Joseph Adams (30) said: 'We are going through a very difficult time because of Boko Haram. Two weeks ago a nearby church was also burned down, and nine other Christians have been killed. Now all the houses around me are emptying'.

As the anti-Christian violence continues unabated, there are growing concerns about Boko Haram's increasing sophistication and strength. In the *Sunday Telegraph* on 8 January, Colin Freeman described 'the alarming evolution of the sect, which has progressed from using machetes and poisoned arrows in its infancy to sophisticated car bombs and Mumbai-style mass gun attacks today'. He continued: 'It is believed to be morphing into a new pan-African *jihadist* franchise, forging links with both al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb, which operates in the vast Sahara region north of Nigeria, and al-Shebab in Somalia'.

Remember the Christians of Nigeria in your prayers.

Books

Preaching in the Holy Spirit

Albert N. Martin
Reformation Heritage Books
pbk, 67pp $8.00

How Sermons Work

David Murray
Evangelical Press
pbk, 160pp, £5.99

The preacher's main duty in life is preaching. Whatever other duties he may have, and he doubtless will have many, he must remind himself that God requires him, as a pastor and teacher, especially to 'feed the church of God' (Acts 20:28). There are undoubtedly different means by which God's flock may be fed. It may be done by fellowships, by conferences and by the reading of good theological books. But above all it ought to be done by well-prepared sermons which the minister of the congregation has constructed during the week, and which he preaches on the Lord's Day – and usually also at the midweek meeting each week.

Those whose duty it is to prepare sermons will value any help which they can get to improve their service and their ministry of soul-feeding. For this reason the present writer would like to draw attention to two recently published and helpful books which deserve to be read by all ministers who take their work seriously. They are both quite short but both offer real assistance to the preacher. These books are: *Preaching in the Holy Spirit*, by Albert N. Martin, published by Reformation Heritage Books (2011), consisting of 67 pages; and *How Sermons Work* by David Murray, Evangelical Press (2011), consisting of 160 pages.

These useful books complement each other in the sense that while one draws attention to the preacher's need of spiritual power, the other points to the importance of the preacher's system, method and careful preparation. Both of these emphases are important since neither is irrelevant to the conscientious preacher, whose burden each week is to endeavour to bring God's Word to the flock in a way which grips their attention and changes their lives.

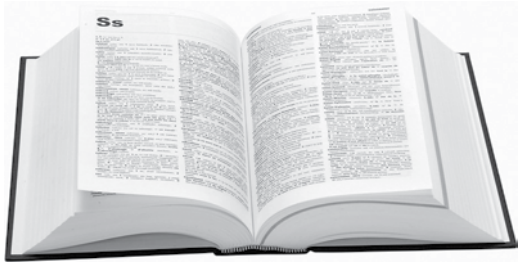
Pastor Al Martin has for over fifty years been a much-loved and much-blessed preacher of God's Word both in his native America and elsewhere in the world. His concern over the years has been to preach in the Spirit. The present writer first heard Pastor Martin at a Leicester Ministers' Conference in the 1960s. The sermons were so edifying that – literally – this hearer lost his appetite, after hearing them, for his ordinary food! The material in this book is divided up into the following chapters: (1) The Agency and Operations of the Spirit in Preaching; (2) The Indispensable Necessity of the Spirit in Preaching; (3) Specific Manifestation of the Spirit in Preaching; (4) Restrained or Diminished Measure of the Spirit in Preaching; (5) Conclusion.

Pastor Martin's concern in the book is to stress the importance for the preacher of seeking to have the agency of God's Spirit on his own soul in the act of preaching.

To preach 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven', argues Al Martin, is to preach with boldness and a manifestation of God's Spirit. This includes a 'warmth' in the preacher's own soul as he delivers the sermon which has been the subject of his study during the past week. It involves at one time a 'sight of the glory of Christ', and at another time, when warning lost sinners, 'the ability to smell the brimstone' of hell.

The soul of the preacher is wholly taken up with his subject. To this is added 'a heightened facility of utterance' in the preacher. The preacher's heart is enlarged when he is assisted by the Spirit and often he himself is surprised by the 'strange' animation which is given to him in the delivery of his own sermon. Passion, eloquence, boldness and red-hot zeal for God and for souls are evident when an anointing is given. This

Books



unction will register in the minds of the hearer as divine authority – an inscribing of God's law upon the conscience in a way that changes lives.

The danger – and surely it is a very real and felt danger in our own day – is that the preacher neither looks for nor prays for this experience of anointing in his sermon-delivery. Such lack of expectation is surely a grieving of God's Spirit. It is not fanaticism but faith on the part of the preacher of God's Word when he prays for and looks for special help from God's Spirit in the very act of preaching itself. It grieves the Spirit when the preacher too seldom or too weakly preaches Christ. And it grieves the Spirit when the preacher looks for no help when in the very act of preaching in the pulpit. It is better to preach a passionate sermon than a sermon which has only 'neatness' in its form and style.

This, in all too brief summary, is the burden of our esteemed friend, Pastor Al Martin. Who that knows the dreary weakness of most modern pulpits will deny that his emphasis on the Spirit's enabling in the act of preaching is both relevant and urgently needed?

In his book *How Sermons Work* Dr David Murray, Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids, USA, is concerned to give sound advice to the preacher mainly in his study.

The chapter headings indicate the intensely practical emphasis of the writer in this helpful book: 'Preparing to preach' – 'Selecting a text' – 'Exegeting the text' – 'Varying the sermons' – 'Beginning the sermon' – 'Sermon organisation' – 'Application' – 'Preaching a sermon'. Too many sermons arrive in the pulpit before they have been adequately composed and constructed. Dr Murray, in an unfussy and friendly way, is writing with the motive here of assisting the preacher to aim high in his preparatory work in the study. What does not cost the preacher much labour in the study will generally not much move the hearer in church.

If a man is to preach at all, affirms Dr Murray, he must be first a sinner saved by grace, sent by grace, supplied with suitable gifts, a believer in the inspiration of the Bible and a lover of men's souls. He must be exemplary in reputation and possessed of a Christian character that 'speaks more loudly than his tongue'.

The preacher's true work is to expound Scripture accurately. His text may be long or short. Great care must be taken to get a text, since not every text is suitable for every occasion. The preacher should expect to get his texts from God.

Studying the meaning of a text involves the preacher in real work. Dr Murray gives a wealth of practical detail, of which we can only give a sample here: approach the study of a text with prayer – assure yourself of correct interpretation – be conscious of the historical setting of your text – extract the doctrines – make sure you preach Christ – check the commentators – shake your text (as Luther did) till the ripe truths fall down!

Our diet of sermons should be a balanced selection from both the Old and the New Testament. Our sermons should teach solid doctrine and always reassure our hearers that God's Word is true and reliable. Matters of a controversial nature should not be shunned nor too zealously sought after. Let there be a balance of doctrine and practice. Evangelistic sermons should be preached regularly – preferably one each week, as Dr Lloyd-Jones advised.

A good sermon needs a good introduction, but not too long, too loud or too predictable. Murray makes a list of some fifteen possible ways of introducing the sermons. The introduction, he says, is like the roots of the tree; the substance of the sermon is the trunk.

The structure of the sermon should be simple – not too many divisions. Murray offers a host of useful ideas from which every preacher can benefit.

The applications of the sermon – that is to say, the address to the conscience of the hearers – need to be wisely prepared by the preacher. Various approaches are here suggested as to how the message of the sermon may be personalised. The hearer needs to leave the church with a challenge to live differently, especially how to love Christ more and to obey Him better.

The concluding chapter touches on some frequently overlooked issues: 'Be yourself' – watch your 'body language' – no hands in pockets! – not too fast or too slow – let there be passion – not many long words – remember there are children present – be simple and clear – not too much reliance on your notes – never promote *yourself* in the pulpit! Above all, set Christ forth to the people as the great and glorious object of faith.

It is clear from the end-notes that David Murray has read and studied a good number of excellent and inspiring authors from the past and also of the present. These include Al Martin, Dabney, Packer, Spurgeon, Stott, Bridges, Broadus and D.M. Lloyd-Jones. To read this book therefore is to be in very good company.

It is to be fervently wished for that young men entering the ministry will aim high both in their sermon preparations and also in their concern to be men who preach in the power of God's Spirit.

Rev Maurice J Roberts

A Call to Separation

A W Pink

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)

This passage gives utterance to a Divine exhortation for those belonging to Christ to hold aloof from all intimate associations with the ungodly. It expressly forbids them entering into alliances with the unconverted. It definitely prohibits the children of God walking arm-in-arm with worldlings. It is an admonition applying to every phase and department of our lives – religious, domestic, social, commercial. And never, perhaps, was there a time when it more needed pressing on Christians than now. The days in which we are living are marked by the spirit of compromise. On every side we behold unholy mixtures, ungodly alliances, unequal yokes. Many professing Christians appear to be trying how near to the world they may walk and yet go to Heaven.

Godly Separation

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. This is a call to godly separation. In each dispensation this Divine demand has been made. To Abraham, Jehovah's peremptory word was, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house' (Gen.12:1). To Israel He said, 'After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances' (Lev.18:3). And again, 'Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation which I cast out before you' (Lev.20:23). It was for their disregard of these very prohibitions that Israel brought down upon themselves such severe chastisements.

At the beginning of the New Testament we are shown the forerunner of Christ standing outside the organised Judaism of his day, calling on men to flee from the wrath to come. The Saviour announced that 'He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out' (Jn.10:3). On the day of Pentecost the word to believers was, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation' (Acts 2:40). Later, to the Christian Hebrews Paul wrote, 'Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp' (13:13). God's call to His people in Babylon is, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues' (Rev.18:4).

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. This is God's word to His people today. Nor does it stand alone. In Romans 16:17 it is said, 'Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them'. In 2 Timothy 2:20-21 we read, 'In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use'. 2 Timothy 3:5 speaks of those 'having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof', then it is added, 'from such turn away'. What a word is that in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 'If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him'. How radical is the admonition of 1 Corinthians 5:11, 'Now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one no, not to eat'.

Low state of Christianity

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. We are fully persuaded that it is disregard of this commandment, for command it is, which is largely responsible for the low state which now obtains so generally among Christians, both individually and corporately. No wonder the spiritual pulse of many churches beats so feebly. No wonder their prayer-meetings are so thinly attended; Christians who are unequally yoked have no heart for prayer. Disobedience at this point is a certain preventative to real and whole-hearted devotion to Christ. No one can be an unshackled follower of the Lord Jesus who is, in any way, 'yoked' to His enemies. He may be a truly saved person, but the testimony of his life, the witness of his walk, will not honour and glorify Christ.

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. This applies first to our religious or ecclesiastical connections. How many Christians are members of so-called 'churches' where much is going on which they know is at direct variance with the Word of God, either the teaching from the pulpit, the worldly attractions used to draw the ungodly, the worldly methods employed to finance it or the constant receiving into its membership of those who give no evidence of having been born again. Believers in Christ who remain in such 'churches' are dishonouring their Lord.

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. This applies to membership in Secret Orders. A yoke is that which unites. Those who belong to a 'lodge' are united in solemn oath and covenant with their 'brother' members. Many of their fellow members give no evidence of being born again. They may believe in a 'Supreme Being', but what love have they for God's Word? What is their relation to God's Son? 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' (Amos 3:3) Can those who owe their all to Christ, both for time and eternity, have fellowship with those who 'despise and reject' Him? Let any Christian reader who is thus unequally yoked get from under it without delay.

Marriage

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. This applies to marriage. There are but two families in this world: the children of God, and the children of the devil (1Jn.3:10). If, then, a daughter of God marries a son of the evil one, she becomes a daughter-in-law to Satan! If a son of God marries a daughter of Satan, he becomes a son-in-law to the devil! By such an infamous step an affinity is formed between one belonging to the Most High and one belonging to His arch-enemy. 'Strong language!' Yes, but not too strong. Oh the bitter reaping from such a sowing! In every case it is the poor Christian who suffers. Read the inspired histories of Samson, Solomon, and Ahab, and see what followed their unholy alliances in wedlock. As well might an

athlete, who attached to himself a heavy weight, expect to win a race, as a Christian to progress spiritually by marrying a worldling. Oh what watchfulness in prayer is needed in the regulation of our affections!

'Be ye not unequally yoked together'. This applies to business partnerships. Disobedience at this point has wrecked many a Christian's testimony and pierced him through with many sorrows. Whatever may be gained of this world by seeking its avenues to wealth and social prestige, will but poorly compensate for the loss of fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Read Proverbs 1:10-14. The path which the disciple of Christ is called to tread is a narrow one, and if he leaves it for a wider road, it will mean severe chastenings, heart-breaking losses, and perhaps the forfeiting the Saviour's 'Well done' at the end of the journey.

We are to hate even the 'garment' – figure of our habits and ways – spotted by the flesh (Jude 23), and are to keep ourselves 'unspotted from the world' (James 1:27). What a searching and sweeping word is that in 2 Corinthians 7:1, 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God'. If any occupation or association is found to hinder our communion with God or our enjoyment of spiritual things, then it must be abandoned. Beware of 'leprosy' in the garment (Lev.13:47). Anything in my habits or ways which mars happy fellowship with the brethren or robs me of power in service, is to be unsparingly judged and made an end of – 'burned' (Lev.13:52). Whatever I cannot do for God's glory must be avoided.

Fellowship impossible

'For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?' How explicit and emphatic are the terms used there! No excuse whatever is there for failing to understand the terms of this exhortation, and the reason with which it is supported. 'Fellowship, communion, concord, part, agreement' are so plain they require no interpreter. All unions, alliances, partnerships, entanglements, with unbelievers are expressly forbidden to the Christian. It is impossible to find within the whole range of Holy Scripture plainer language on any subject than we have here. 'Righteousness, unrighteousness; light, darkness; Christ, Belial' – what have they in common? What bond is there between them?

The contrasts presented are very pointed and searching. 'Righteousness' is right doing; 'unrighteousness' is wrong doing. The unerring and only standard of right doing is 'the word of righteousness' (Heb.5:13). By this alone is the Christian's life and walk to be regulated. But the worldling disregards and defies it. Then what 'fellowship' can there be between one who is in subjection to God's Word and one who is not? 'Light' and 'darkness'. God is light (1Jn.1:5) and His saints are 'the children of light' (Luke 16:8). But the children of the Wicked One are 'darkness' (Eph.5:8). What communion, then, can there be between members of families so dissimilar? 'Christ' and 'Belial' – what concord can there be between one to whom Christ is everything, and one who despises and rejects Him?

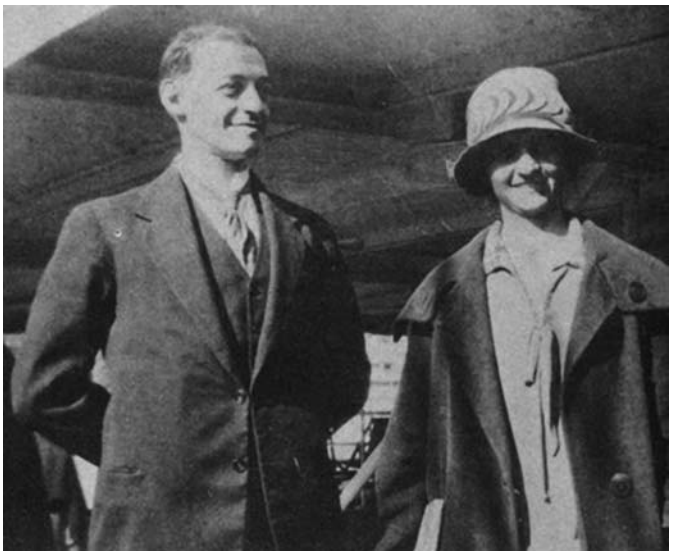
God's Promises

'For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'. How blessed is this! First, we have the exhortation given, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together'; second, the reason adduced, 'for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?'; third, the inducement proffered. This is a divine promise, and it is striking to note it is a sevenfold one:

- 1) 'I will dwell in them',
- 2) 'and walk in them',
- 3) 'And I will be their God',
- 4) 'And they shall be my people',
- 5) 'And I will receive you',
- 6) 'And will be a Father unto you',
- 7) 'And ye shall be my sons and daughters'.

'I will dwell in them', is fellowship; 'and walk in them', is companionship; 'and I will be their God', is relationship. First, in them, then for them; and 'if God be for us, who can be against us?' (Rom. 8:31). 'And they shall be my people', is ownership; acknowledged as His. 'And I will receive you', means being brought to the place of experimental and conscious nearness to God. 'And will be a Father unto you' means I will manifest Myself to you in this character, and impart to your hearts all the joys of such. 'And ye shall be my sons and daughters' means that such godly separation from the world will afford demonstration that we are His 'sons and daughters' (cf Mt.5:44-5).

'Saith the Lord Almighty'. This is the only time the divine title 'Almighty' is found in all the twenty-one Epistles of the New Testament! It seems to be brought in here for the purpose of emphasising the sufficiency of our Resource. As another has said, 'Let any Christian act on the command of separation given in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, and he will find his path so beset with difficulties and so tending to arouse the hostility of all, that if his eyes are not kept fixed on the Almighty God who has thus called him out, he will surely have a breakdown'. But let it be noted that these promises are conditional, conditional on obeying the preceding exhortations. Yet if the heart lays hold of this blessed inducement, then obedience to the command will be easy and pleasant.



Arthur and Vera Pink in Sydney

The Storm

Pastor Aaron Lewis, Crosslanes Chapel, New Forest

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:30-31).

Dear brethren, we, in the providence of God, face difficult and testing times. There are seasons when we find our hearts overwhelmed. The Psalmist declared, 'How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?' (Ps.13:2). Our Lord said in John 16:33, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation'. However, be comforted for the Lord went on to say, 'be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'. In difficult times, we need to look up to our God and remember that is He over all, and He is working His purpose out for our good.

Divine assistance in stormy weather

Peter here in the midst of a storm, with doubts troubling his heart, cried out to the Lord for help and through divine assistance was supported. Note that little prayer in this verse, 'Lord, save me'. Though brief, it was to the point, earnestly uttered, and truly meant. The Lord hearing his prayer, came to his aid. Having brought him safely into the ship, and causing also the winds to cease, he along with the other disciples was brought safely to the other side. Oh, dear brethren, when in straits cry earnestly, from the depths of your heart, unto the Lord for help!

After feeding the 5000, our Lord 'constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away … But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary'. These men were confronted with a storm, but see here there was divine assistance awaiting them.

Sent into the pathway of a storm

'And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away'. We are told that He 'constrained them', that is to compel. Now, it is very important to recognise that they must go! There are certain storms we must face. Sometimes, in His providence, the Lord preserves us from some difficulty. We can look back and see that we were preserved from some difficulty. However, at other times, in His providence, He sends us straight into the pathway of some storm.

We see this clearly in Psalm 107:25, 'For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof'. All things are in His providence, there is nothing outside it. In the Westminster Shorter Catechism we read, 'God's works of providence are, his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions'. The storms we face are all in His providence. He has willed them. Joseph recognised that God was over the difficult and trying situations which he faced because of what his brothers had done: 'And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt' (Gen.45:4-8). Note those words, 'God sent me!' Although it can be difficult, recognise God's hand in it.

'For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof'. He is over all. Samuel Rutherford wrote, 'There is no cross or misery that befalls the church of God or any of His children, but is related to God'. The Puritan, Thomas Watson, wrote, 'Whoever brings affliction it is God that sends it'. My friends, look to this truth, and submit to God. Now, some providences are dark and mysterious, and only in heaven may we begin to understand, but remember this, He is working His purpose out for our good. 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose' (Rom.8:28). All things, not just the good things, and why, because He so loves you, and desires your good.

Take comfort here, God is in control. He will bring you through as He did those disciples. 'He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven' (Ps.107:30). He sent, and so He will calm the storm and bring you through. It may be in this life we are brought to a place of calm and the trial is now behind us. However, consider further, one day He will bring us through them all. They will all be behind us when we reach the desired haven of heaven. Oh, what a blessing it will be to be there; there will be no more storms, all will be calm, and most wonderful!

The Storm

The ship was tossed with the waves, the reason being, the winds were contrary (v24). Down on the south coast of England there is a place of outstanding natural beauty, called Mudeford. At certain times the river that flows through that place meets the incoming tide of the sea and the water becomes choppy. Small boats passing through can find themselves in difficulty. We face times when the going is not easy. Maybe it is some family difficulty, some personal trial, some difficulty in the church, or sometimes it may be a season when the devil is very active against us. Here below we face tribulation. This world is not heaven, here our joys are interrupted by sorrow.

Pain is known within and tears are shed. 'They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end' (Ps107:27). In the midst of a trial one may be at his wits' end for fear, even though he has known the Lord for many years. Consider the convoys crossing the Atlantic in the

second world war. Many a sailor knew fear in his heart, not only because of the German U-boats, but also because of the mountainous seas.

In a time of trial one may not sense the Lord's presence, one feels alone and prayer is difficult. However, take comfort, He is watching you. On this occasion, our Lord was not physically with His disciples to begin with, yet His eye was upon them. 'And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them' (Mk.6:48). He is watching you, and all your tears are collected up in His bottle.

Note further that He came to their aid and spoke words of comfort when they were so fearful, thinking He was a spirit: 'Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid'. He will come to your aid! Are we not thankful when the Lord speaks to our soul. In some difficulty, we may be reading the Word, when we come across some verse in which the Lord so speaks to us, and we find comfort.

Now, take note of the cautious request of Peter: 'Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water'. His faith was strengthened a little by Christ's word, and with His eye fixed upon the Lord, and through divine assistance, he was found walking on the water. 'But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me'. Having taken His eyes off the Lord, and having them fixed on the storm, he began to sink. You may know what a sinking feeling is, and therefore identify yourselves with Peter. Suddenly, fear may come upon you, the clouds have gathered, and you sink into the depths. David was found crying out of the depths (Ps.130:1). Dear brethren, we face stormy weather.

A Earnest Cry to the Lord

He cried, 'Lord, save me'. When you are sinking cry, 'Lord help me'. The Psalmist says, 'From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I' (Ps.61:2). In another Psalm, 107, 'They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses' (vv27,28). Spurgeon comments, 'Though at their wits' end, they had wit enough to pray'!

In Psalm 130:1-2, we read, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications'. Cry out to the Lord. Remember, He delights to hear His children doing this, seeing their total need of Him. No matter how low you feel cry out to the Lord. Octavius Winslow wrote: 'Pray, pray, pray! Out of the depths of your difficulty, your need, your sorrow, cry mightily unto God. There is no depth too profound, no darkness so dense, no need so pressing or perplexity so great, but from it you may cry unto God'. He is able to help you in every trial you face.

Divine Assistance

Now we have already observed the power of Christ, firstly, in coming to them walking on the sea, and then in supporting Peter to walk on the sea. Now we are given other instances of His divine power, 'And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased' (vv31-32). He supported Peter in the storm and caused the wind to cease.

Are we not thankful for the gracious hands of the Lord? In the gospel, Christ's hands were stretched out to us, and through the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit within, we received Him. How blessed we are for He stretches out His hand to believers when they are in straits, to help and comfort them. Oh, my dear brethren, there is Divine assistance awaiting us in stormy weather; there will be support! 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness' (Is.41:10). 'I will', says the Lord, and so there will be help coming your way. There will be supporting grace, and in time, there will be delivering grace.

Consider how He is able to support you through His word. The Psalmist gave this wonderful testimony, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me' (Ps.119:49-50). How the Lord can so take and use His word, what comfort we have from this wonderful book! There is Divine power ready to help and support you. Oh be comforted, His eye is on you and He will come to your aid! He will help and He will bring you through. Our Lord not only supported Peter, but also made the wind to cease, and so along with those other disciples Peter arrived safe on the other side.

Note on this occasion our Lord's loving rebuke. Jesus 'said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' (v31). His faith, though it had appeared somewhat strengthened as he walked on the sea towards Jesus, was small when he saw the wind boisterous and himself sinking. Where there is but little exercise of faith, a loving rebuke like this is required. Our Lord declares, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent' (Rev.3:19). He loves us, and so He will rebuke us, yet He will come to our aid. Divine assistance is awaiting you in the present storm and in the storms to come. He will not forsake you. Let us be a people who look to the Lord by way of faith: 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him' (Ps.37:7). May the Lord help us to rest in Him whilst in stormy weather.

Dear brethren, we have been blessed in the gospel, and we are still blessed; God is a Father to us, Christ is a Shepherd to us, He will lead us to the green pastures and He will be with us in the valleys.

But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice:
let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them:
let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Psalm 5:11

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