

## May 2017 Newsletter





## **WELCOME**

### LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

## PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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#### CONTACT DETAILS

Stornoway RPCS Coulregrein Mission House C/O 9 Perceval Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland, HS1 2UG

www.stornowayrpcs.org

info@stornowayrpcs.org

Scottish Charity No: SC043043

#### WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

I want to express our gratitude to you for all the support that has been given to Brenda, Zoe, and me at this time of moving. They say that starting a new job, having a child, and moving home are some of the more stressful of life's events, yet the Lord has sustained us! We are glad to be here and are beginning the process of getting settled.

It was fantastic to arrive off the ferry and be greeted by a whole team of men ready to do their part in unloading the van. The process was quick with us all working together. This teamwork prompted my mind to consider the Apostle Paul's use of the human body as a metaphor for the church. One example is in Ephesians: "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16)

It is a good thing when our physical bodies work well. If one small part does not do its share then a whole system can be crippled. God has designed the human body with intricate care for each member to work in harmony. The Church is exactly the same, hence Paul's metaphor.

What a joy it has been to experience the church body working well together in this time of our move to Stornoway. Many of you have taken your turn in this work of love, whether transporting our belongings, unpacking the van, providing food, or babysitting. All this practical help has meant a lot to us and we thank God for it.

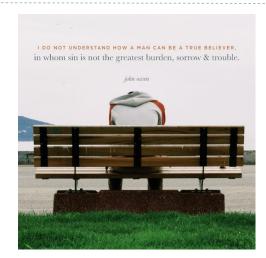
Yet, even beyond the material help there has been more spiritual outworking of this principle too. Practical displays of love are readily seen but the silent prayers are hidden from all except from our great God who hears prayer. Prayer is one way that the body can work together to edify itself in love. You may not have been able to move furniture, but Jesus teaches us that by faith our prayers can move mountains. Your prayers for our move and for our family have been greatly valued by us.

As we look forward to the future, we must set our eyes on Jesus. Jesus is the greatest need for our congregation because He is the head of the body. Without the head there is no direction for the members of the body. As we individually and corporately look to Jesus, our head, we will grow closer to one another and will become more useful in His service.

In Christ,

Stephen





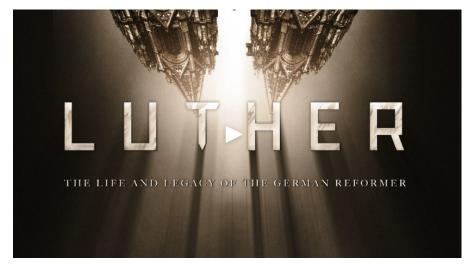
#### **NEWS & EVENTS**

#### NEW LUTHER FILM

A new documentary about the life of the German reformer, Martin Luther, has recently been released and can be purchased via www.lutherdocumentary.com.

#### Synopsis:

Discover the story behind the man who sparked the Protestant Reformation. Told through a seamless combination of liveaction storytelling and artistic animation, Martin Luther's daring



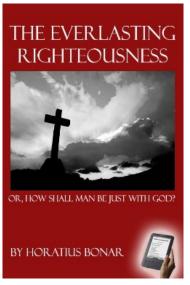
life is presented in extensive detail while still making the film relevant, provocative and accessible.

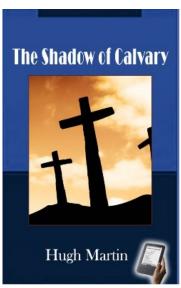
#### RPCNA-JAPAN PRESBYTERY

A request from the RPCNA to remember the work in Japan, which is said to be one of the largest unreached people groups in the world.

#### FREE CLASSIC EBOOKS ON THE ATONEMENT

The following eBooks on the atonement of Christ can be downloaded for free via Monergism, at <a href="https://www.monergism.com/blog/16-free-classic-ebooks-atonement">https://www.monergism.com/blog/16-free-classic-ebooks-atonement</a>.

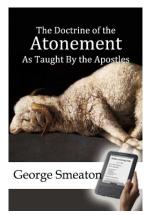


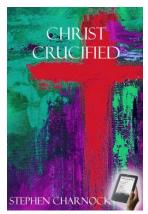


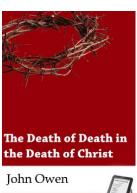
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America shared OPC Japan's photo. 11 April at 18:51 ⋅ €

Pray for evangelism in Japan, where there is our Japan Presbytery -RPCNA. Arguably, Japan is the least churched mission-field of all RP's ministries.













#### **GLEANINGS BY BILL LUCAS**

#### THE GOD OF ALL GRACE

To experience grace is to experience an utterly undeserved kindness from an unexpected source and this attitude is so alien to our sinful, selfish natures and our modern lifestyle that it is difficult for us to understand it, or accept it. Grace is the power of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit exerted in complete unity of purpose and harmony of action for our salvation. In irresistible power, it transforms a sinner into a saint, an enemy into a child of God. It is power harnessed and directed by love. It is the power of omnipotence acting under the direction and dictation of infinite love -- a power which can touch us in our weakest places and in our darkest moments with all the tenderness of a great love.

An example was the powerful work of Jesus in the raising of Jairus' daughter. The words that Jesus used to call the little girl back to life was "Talitha cumi" These words were, of course, from the everyday language of the people concerned and had a very lovely meaning and usage. Literally it meant "Rise, little lamb" and they were the morning call of a mother to her child or, as we would say nowadays, "Time to be up, love."

In addition to power and love, grace was a gift, it comes freely and costs us nothing at all. It is funded and gifted out of "the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7)

When we accept the biblical teaching that we are "saved by grace" then we accept that we are saved by power -- the omnipotent power of God. We accept that we are saved by love, amazing, undeserved, infinite love. And we accept that we are saved by a God who was absolutely free to have dealt with us, not in mercy, but in justice. That he has not done so, we owe totally to the fact that he freely chose to deal with us in grace.

#### From 'The God of All Grace' by Professor J Douglas Macmillan.

#### THE PRECIPICE OF SIN

Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins. (Psalm 19:13)

Such was the prayer of the "man after God's own heart." Did holy David need to pray thus? How needful, then, must such a prayer be for us babes in grace! It is as if he said, "Keep me back, or I shall rush headlong over the precipice of sin." Our evil nature, like an ill-tempered horse, is apt to run away. May the grace of God put the bridle upon it, and hold it in, that it rush not into mischief. What might not the best of us do if it were not for the checks which the Lord sets upon us both in providence and in grace!

The psalmist's prayer is directed against the worst form of sin -- that which is done with deliberation and wilfulness. Even the holiest need to be "kept back" from the vilest transgressions. It is a solemn thing to find the apostle Paul warning saints against the most loathsome sins. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." What! do saints want warning against such sins as these? Yes, they do. The whitest robes, unless their purity be preserved by divine grace, will be defiled by the blackest spots.

Experienced Christian, boast not in your experience; you will trip yet if you look away from Him who is able to keep you from falling. Ye whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright, say not, "We shall never sin," but rather cry, "Lead us not into temptation." There is enough tinder in the heart of the best of men to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God shall quench the sparks as they fall. Who would have dreamed that righteous Lot could be found drunken, and committing uncleanness? Hazael said, "Is Thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" and we are very apt to use the same self-righteous question. May infinite wisdom cure us of the madness of self-confidence.

#### PSALM 23

The Lord is my Shepherd -- That's relationship! I shall not want -- That's supply!

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures --That's rest! He leadeth me beside the still waters -- That's

refreshment!

He restoreth my soul -- That's healing! He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness --

That's guidance!

For His name's sake -- That's purpose! Yea, though I walk through the valley of the

shadow of death -- That's testing!

I will fear no evil -- That's protection! For Thou art with me -- That's faithfulness!

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me --That's discipline! Thou preparest a table before me in the presence

of mine enemies -- That's hope!

Thou anointest my head with oil -- That's consecration! My cup runneth over -- That's abundance!

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life And I will dwell in the house of the Lord —

—That's blessing! That's security!

Forever -- That's eternity!

#### **Author unknown**

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT

Gracious God, I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, the Comforter -- pure as dew, cleansing as fire, tender and refreshing as the breath of Spring. Blessed Trinity, always giving your choice things to us, your unworthy children, accept my gratitude for which I have no words.

F B Meyer

#### YEA AND AMEN

... Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant ... (Heb. 12:24)

In this covenant, pardoning mercy, renewing grace, and eternal glory are promised. Earth and heaven, the creature and the creator himself, by himself, belong to believers. You must know that all their promises are "Yea and Amen" in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). The covenant was made for his sake: it was ratified and confirmed by his death. His blood is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. 13:20). His blood being shed, the covenant stands good to all eternity.

Here is a vast encouragement to lay hold on the promises. If you come to God and ask: "Lord! hast thou not made promises of pardon to the penitent and believing? Promises of grace to the humble? Promises of satisfaction to the hungry souls? Promises of joy and comfort to the mourners? In his word, God answers, "Yes." If you further add: "Lord, let these promises be accomplished for thy Christ's sake"; the answer is, "Amen, it shall be so: they shall all be fulfilled."

Nathanael Vincent, Puritan Sermons.

#### **FORGIVENESS**

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? (Genesis 50:19)

Joseph's brothers had just asked for forgiveness, anticipating retribution following their father's death. Joseph's forgiveness was unconditional. In that way he was acting as God would act. Sadly we as Christians find it difficult to forgive others' faults even when they confess. Let us be Christ-like and exhibit compassion and restoration and not be pharisaical and heartless in our attitude and response.

Brian Russell

#### FLAVEL QUOTE

It is better to be as low as hell with a promise, than in paradise without one.

#### John Flavel

#### WHO IS JESUS? HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

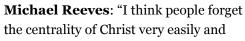
In this brief video from Ligonier, a number of Ministers explain why it is vital for Christians to be able to rightly

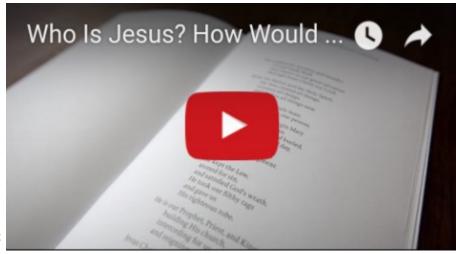
articulate who Jesus is and what he has done.

#### Transcript:

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Mark Dever: "These days I think we need—we would be helped at least—by a clarifying teaching on Scripture, particularly what Scripture has to say about Jesus Christ."





think that the gospel is some abstract package of salvation that God gives. But Jesus Christ is the grace of God, is the gift of God given to us, and so to know who Jesus Christ is and what He's done could not be more central for Christians."

**Derek Thomas**: "What does it mean to be a Christian? Well, it means I'm in fellowship with, I'm in union with a person—the Lord Jesus. It's about Him."

"Martin Luther, I think said, "what is the most important thing about being Christian? Knowing that He loved me and gave Himself for me ."

**Ian Hamilton**: "Get Jesus Christ wrong, and you get everything wrong. We live in an age when evangelicalism has often descended into lowest-common-denominator teaching, and the great danger is that we lose the glory of the person of Christ and when you lose the glory of the person of Christ you lose the glory of the gospel."

**Derek Thomas**: "All of theology ultimately revolves around Him—the Lord Jesus, and it's important to express who He is and what He has done in a way that is biblical."

**W. Robert Godfrey**: "We always have to be going back to the Bible and to the truth of the Bible, and allow the Bible to speak to us—not insist that the Bible says what we want it to say."

**Albert Mohler:** "Well, the gospel doesn't matter as just a set of beliefs. The gospel doesn't matter as just an added meaning to life. The gospel only matters if the question is heaven or hell. It's a question of the grace and mercy of God on the one hand or the wrath of God on the other."

**Steven Lawson:** "It is critical that our message be a carefully defined presentation with theological integrity concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ."

**Derek Thomas**: "Martin Luther, I think said, 'What is the most important thing about being Christian? Knowing that He loved me and gave Himself for me."

# Jesus Christ is the Center of Salvation

E SEE THAT OUR WHOLE SALVATION AND ALL ITS PARTS are comprehended in Christ. We should, therefore, take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of Him." If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in His anointing. If we seek His strength, it lies in His dominion; if purity, in His conception; if gentleness, it appears in His birth. For by His birth He was made like us in all respects, that He might learn to feel our pain. If we seek redemption, it lies in His passion; if acquittal, in His condemnation; if remission of the curse, in His cross; if satisfaction, in His sacrifice; if purification, in His blood; if reconciliation, in His descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in His tomb; if newness of life, in His resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, in His entrance into heaven; if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in His kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to Him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in Him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other. Some men, not content with Him alone, are borne hither and thither from one hope to another. Even if they concern themselves chiefly with Him, they nevertheless stray from the right way in turning some part of their thinking in another direction. Yet, such distrust cannot creep in where men have, once for all, truly known the abundance of His blessings. - John Calvin (1509-1564), INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, 2.16.19 (translated from the Latin by Ford Lewis Battles [1960]).

# What Jesus Christ Did for Us

F WE THINK OF WHO HE WAS WHO BORE ALL THIS, AND OF WHY
He bore it, we may well bow not the knee but the heart in endless love
and thankfulness. – Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910), from a meditation
on Mark 15.1-20.

#### TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS

"Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12)

This verse is often treated as if it were a proverb that means, "Life is short, so live wisely." But in the context of the whole psalm, it means much more than that, as we will see. It is a key part of a meditation on God and on living as the people of God.

In Hebrew, verse 12 begins with the words "to number our days." This phrase picks up the theme of time that is so pervasive in this psalm. A reflection on time leads us to see how weak we are and how short our lives are: "You return man to dust and say, 'Return, O children of man!' ... You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers... The years of our life are seven-



ty, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away" (vv. 3, 5–6, 10). Here, Psalm 90 shows its connection to the concerns of Psalm 89 about man's frailty: "Remember how short my time is! For what vanity you have created all the children of man! What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?" (Ps. 89:47-48). Such realism about our weakness is the necessary foundation of any true wisdom. "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am" (Ps. 39:4).

The shortness and weakness of human life are the fruit of sin and judgment in the world. The psalmist acknowledges that sin frankly, saying, "You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence" (Ps. 90:8). He knows that his holy God visits His judgment on sinners. "For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh... . Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?" (vv. 9, 11). It is surely frightening to think that God's wrath will equal all the obedience that is due to Him.

Although life is short and the wrath of God terrifying, the mercy and protection of God for His people are great. God is the home of His people: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations" (v. 1). Through all the generations of His people's existence, reaching back all the way to creation, God has always preserved and protected His people. Even in the garden of Eden, He promised that He would redeem His own (Gen 3:15). God remains the home of His people because He is the redeeming God.

Moses reminds us that while the life of man is frail and short, God is eternal. "Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (v. 2). Moses takes us back before God created the earth to remind us that our God is before and beyond time and this world. He has always been, and He is sufficient to Himself without us. Moses makes this point in another way in verse 4: "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night." Time does not have the same meaning for God that it has for us. For us, a thousand years is a time so long that we cannot really imagine experiencing it. For God, it is no different from a very short period of time. He is eternal, above the time that He created.

This eternal God directs the course of history by His infinite power. Moses, who had seen the power of God often displayed in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, continues to pray that the majesty of God's works would remain before the eyes of the people: "Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children" (v. 16). As God had brought suffering by His power, so Moses prays that God will send blessing: "Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil" (v. 15). If our need is to number our days by contrasting their shortness with the eternal nature of God, then our prayer to God is that He would teach us: "Teach us to number our days." We will never learn that lesson in our own strength. We are not only ignorant if left to ourselves, but we suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18). We convince ourselves that we have a long time to live, and as long as we are healthy, we really believe that we will live forever in this body. We need a teacher, and the only teacher who can rescue us from ourselves is God.

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#### HEAVEN'S GLORY

Heaven's Glory is a new release from Puritan Publications and can be purchased at www.puritanpublications.com.



Heaven's Glory - by by Christopher Love (1618-1651)

Christopher Love (1618-1651) was a fiery and practical Puritan preacher. His works consist of some of the best written and preached biblical expositions in print.

The springboard for this entire work is the verse, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory," (Colossians 3:4). Why should the Christian have a hope of heaven? What may be expected there? What is Christ's role there right now and how will the Christian interact with Him before the throne of God? What does it mean that Christ is glorious, and how will his appearing usher in with great glory the heavenly state for all those who trust in him?

Nothing has greater influence into a Christian's practice here in this world than the serious consideration of our everlasting estate in the world to come — the glory and happiness which is prepared for the elect in Christ. The scope of this work is to discover to the Christian those unspeakable joys which are set before us, that we may press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Love explains what is meant when Christ is said to be our life; second, what is meant when it says that Christ our life shall appear. And lastly, what is meant that we will also appear with him in glory. These are his main ideas in explaining heaven's glory.

Love shows that these words are quickening and encouraging having respect to the recompense of reward for the believers who will have such an entrance ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So, what will heaven be like? This work answers that question almost exhaustively.

#### WAITING AND LONGING TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

We're so used to hearing sermons that it becomes ordinary and routine for us. Yet it is meant to be a life-changing and world-changing activity. Christ has sent someone to declare His Word to us in a special way. No words outside of Scripture are more significant than those we hear from the pulpit. The Spirit of God makes "the reading, but especially the preaching, of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation" (Shorter Catechism, Q89). We should therefore be longing and waiting for the sermons we hear.

In what follows we will hear the heart-cry of a flock to a shepherd to come and feed them with God's Word. This was a congregation who would experience one of Scotland's most richly blessed ministries – ever. The parish of Fenwick, Ayrshire were calling a young man called William Guthrie. Writing a call to a pastor can seem to some like a procedural technicality or in some cases a fairly casual approach but in this case the document breathes spiritual earnestness.

#### LONGING EXPRESSED

The congregation write to Guthrie as "Reverend and well-beloved" recalling first of all their struggles to get a church building newly erected. They mention "how (after many prayers and difficulties) by the great mercy and good hand of God upon" them, they had a church building "erected to the honour of His name and for [their] edification". They describe themselves as a "hungry people" full of spiritual needs.

They are "bound in conscience and pressed in spirit to make use of so fair a mercy by begging from God and looking out (in the ordinary way) one who may break the Bread of Life" to them and "watch for [their] souls".

It has pleased the Lord to incline all our hearts as one man towards you as the man of God sent unto us and kept for us by special providence

They urge Guthrie through the compassion of Jesus (the great and chief shepherd), beseeching and charging him in His name" to accept their call to ministry in that place.

You are the first after whom the eyes and hearts of us all have been carried with a holy violence and this is the first call that ever came from this place, we rest assured that you neither dare nor will refuse the burden

So they seek that he will "refresh the hearts of a waiting longing and languishing people by a ready condescendence". They close the call describing themselves as those who are resolved to be "your very affectionate friends and flock". It was dated 27 September 1643. The original call is displayed on the wall of Fenwick Parish Church.

#### LONGING FULFILLED

These prayers were not just answered in Guthrie accepting the call. It was a ministry that would truly transform the parish. Being the first pastor there, Guthrie found a great spiritual ignorance as well as a general neglect of the house of God and the way of salvation. The Sabbath was profaned and family worship neglected. The young minister's zeal and desire for the salvation of his flock overcame all discouragement in his way and his preaching was sealed with the genuine conversion of most people in the parish.

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Like most Covenanting ministers, Guthrie was very diligent in visiting his people, teaching the young and insisting on family worship. In this way the Word of God had a daily place of honour in the home. One minister said that almost everyone in the Fenwick parish was "brought to make a fair profession of godliness, and had the worship of God in their families". The parish experienced true revival during that time.

What was Guthrie's preaching like? It was faithful and fearless. It distinguished between those who really needed comfort and those who needed rebuke. Matthew Crawford, minister at Eastwood, said that William Guthrie "converted and confirmed many thousand souls, and was esteemed the greatest practical preacher in Scotland".

William Guthrie is most famous for the valuable little book that he wrote called *The Christian's Great Interest*. This deals with the way of salvation and how we can be sure we are saved. The word "interest" means a legal claim. The theologian John Owen said that there was more theology in it than in everything he had ever written put together.

#### THE CLOSE OF A FRUITFUL MINISTRY

By 1663, more than 400 ministers were forced out of their pulpits for refusing to be re-ordained under episcopal government and for refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the king over the Church. They were told they must leave their parishes and not live within 20 miles of them or within 6 miles of Edinburgh. Guthrie was able to stay for a little longer but was finally forced from his pulpit and his physical health collapsed shortly afterwards. He suffered a complication of diseases and returned to the place of his birth never to preach again.

Looking back, he was able to give this testimony to the man who came to remove him from his congregation: "I bless the Lord He has given me some success, and a seal of my ministry upon the souls and consciences of not a few that are gone to heaven, and of some that are yet in the way to it".

#### **CONCLUSION**

Many today see the ordinary means of grace, including preaching as too ordinary. They are looking for something extraordinary. Yet it was the ordinary methods of preaching, catechising and pastoral care that the Lord used to bring revival to Fenwick. He blessed the means that He had ordained to fulfil the longings of a people above all that they were able to ask or think. God is also able to bless our longing expectations in the next sermon we hear.

"I bless the Lord He has
given me some success,
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#### Dear Children

This month we have a new minister – Rev Stephen McCollum. But what is a minister? He is a messenger whom God sends to tell us good news. Isn't it wonderful to know that God who is in heaven thinks of us here in Stornoway and has sent us his own messenger who will bring us a message from Himself each week! What message will he bring us? He will tell us about God, why He made us and how He saves us and much, much more. All this is written in the Bible and Mr McCollum has been sent to explain it to us.

Now, if the Queen was to send us a messenger with a message from herself every week we would feel very honoured and we would want to know what she was wanting to say to us. We would show that messenger great respect and listen well to what he had to say. But it is no earthly monarch who has sent us a messenger. It is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. How much more should we respect Him and His messenger!

My advice to you is to be diligent in coming to God's house each week to hear what God has to say to us and to be diligent in listening to that message. The Bible tells us we need faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is we are to trust in Him as our Saviour from sin. It also says that "faith comes by hearing". You may feel that you don't understand what the minister is saying but, as we listen, the Holy Spirit helps us to understand. Here is a prayer for you from Psalm 119, verse 18: "Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things in your Law".

I pray that early in your young days you will come to love God's Holy Word and all that it teaches and be able to say with David in Psalm 119, verse 97: "O, how I love your Law!" Also, I pray that you will love the Lord Jesus Christ who came to save us from our sins and to prepare us to spend eternity with Him in heaven. God says in Proverbs 8, verse 17: "I love them that love Me and those who seek Me early shall find Me."

With my love and prayers

Granny M

**Activity:** 

Write out the above three texts and learn them.

