



STORNOWAY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO
THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS
(1 TIMOTHY 1:15)

March 2019 Newsletter



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

We are hosting two topical evangelistic services, one this month and the other in April, dv. The themes are:

Why Does God Allow Suffering? (31st March at 6.30pm)

Why are Christians such Hypocrites? (28th April at 6.30pm)

Both of these questions are often given as reasons or excuses for people not trusting in Christ. I would encourage you to think of anyone that you know who struggles with these issues and invite them to come and hear a sermon that addresses them. These services will be the same format as regular Sabbath evening worship, followed by refreshments and an opportunity for anyone to ask follow-up questions concerning things raised (or not raised) in the sermon.

The question for 31st March focuses on why God allows suffering. Suffering is everywhere and we can't avoid it. We know many people who have suffered, some patiently trusting in God but others bitterly angry against Him. This question is intensely personal for many people and we must seek to answer It Biblically and compassionately. As with all such questions, the Gospel holds forward the best and only answer.

Let me urge you to make these meetings a matter of serious prayer. We must pray that people will come along and hear the Gospel and that it will be explained simply and clearly. We must pray that the Spirit will prepare hearts and apply the Word with power. We must pray that Christ's cause will be advanced and that all the glory will go to God.

In Christ,

Stephen

NEWS & EVENTS

UPCOMING SPECIAL SERVICES

Sabbath 31st March 6.30pm—Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Sabbath 28th April 6.30pm—Why are Christians such Hypocrites?

OBITUARY—JEFF O'NEIL

Many of you will have been saddened by the news that our beloved brother Jeff O'Neil from Port Talbot, South Wales, passed away on Friday 25th January 2019, having suffered for 7 weeks with a sudden attack of severe pancreatitis. He had a wide circle of national and international Christian friends who prayed earnestly that he be restored to health but the Lord answered these prayers by taking him to be with Himself where there is no more pain or suffering. We can now say concerning him in the words of the Psalmist:



- 2 “Then are they glad because at rest
And quiet now they be
So to the haven He them brings
Which they desired to see.”



Jeff O'Neil

We got to know Jeff and the family over 45 years ago when they came to Lewis on holiday along with another three families and set up camp at Dalbeg. The friendship that was forged then continued to grow over the years. For them, Lewis was like heaven on earth. Each year they faithfully made their way north and west not so much for the weather but more for the Christian fellowship they enjoyed amongst the Lord's people many of whom are now in glory.

Jeff was a highly gifted man and an avid reader who devoured the Puritan writings. He had a very retentive memory and consequently made valuable contributions to the fellowship gatherings especially at the Communion. These times of worship and fellowship brought much blessing to his soul.

In Port Talbot he ministered to and pastored a small group which had left the Presbyterian Church and in so doing he discovered he had a gift for preaching. This meant that from time to time he was given the opportunity to preach when here on holiday. His preaching was devotional and delivered with zeal and eloquence and the Lord's people benefitted greatly from his addresses. Thankfully, with modern technology, some of these can still be heard on Sermon Audio.

In the early 1990's he met a young man from Singapore, JJ Lim, who had come to Wales to study. As was typical of Jeff and Shirley they gave this young man hospitality and Jeff took him under his wing and mentored him. JJ was then asked to take charge of a Chinese church in London. It was not surprising that Jeff was invited there to speak there as well as at their conferences. When JJ went back to Singapore and Jeff had by this time retired from the steelworks he and Shirley would spend some three or four months out in Singapore giving JJ a break from preaching. During this time he would be invited to chair their church conferences and conduct their devotional exercises. These addresses are available online at www.pilgrim-covenant.com. The Singaporeans really took to him and looked on him as one of 'the Fathers'. He exerted a great influence on that church and its worship. Not only are they wholly psalm-singing but they have a church plant in China who are also wholly psalm-singing. Jeff used to say that all this was as a result of their first visit to Lewis in 1973!

He had Christian friends in many parts of the world who will be deeply saddened to learn of his passing. We, in Lewis, will truly miss his annual visits, his warm fellowship and lively debates at fellowship gatherings when "iron sharpened iron". He has left fragrant memories of times of real blessing in his fellowship. On a personal level, he was like a brother to me. I will miss his long regular phone calls when we spoke on spiritual matters. Although on some things we had differences of opinion it was good and stimulating to debate these in a friendly and brotherly way. I have lost a true brother in the Lord who enriched my spiritual life in many ways.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to his sorrowing widow, Shirley, who was his devoted companion of 60 years; his daughter Rebekah and sons Jonathan and Gregory as well as their respective families. It is our prayer that the Lord will comfort their grieving hearts and bless them abundantly.

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

Rev. Donald Macdonald



GLEANINGS BY BILL LUCAS

THE EMMAUS ROAD

Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:45)

Here we perceive the opening of understanding. In the first work He has many fellow-labourers, but in the second He stands alone; many can bring the Scriptures to the mind, but the Lord alone can prepare the mind to receive the Scriptures.

Our Lord Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear, but He instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter, but He imparts an inward taste for the truth, by which we perceive its savour and spirit. The most unlearned of men become ripe scholars in the school of grace when the Lord Jesus by His Holy Spirit unfolds the mysteries of the kingdom to them, and grants the divine anointing by which they are enabled to behold the invisible.

Happy are we if we have had our understandings cleared and strengthened by the Master! How many men of profound learning are ignorant of eternal things! They know the killing letter of revelation, but its killing spirit they cannot discern; they have a veil upon their hearts which the eyes of carnal reason cannot penetrate.

Such was our case a little time ago; we who now see were once utterly blind; truth was to us as beauty in the dark, a thing unnoticed and neglected. Had it not been for the love of Jesus we should have remained to this moment in utter ignorance, for without His gracious opening of our understanding, we could no more have attained to spiritual knowledge than an infant can climb the Pyramids, or an ostrich fly up to the stars.

Jesus' College is the only one in which God's truth can be really learned; other schools may teach us what is to be believed, but Christ's alone can show us how to believe it. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and by earnest prayer call in His blessed aid that our dull wits may grow brighter, and our feeble understandings may receive heavenly things.

CHS

HOW CAN THEY ESCAPE

"He will keep the feet of His saints." 1 Samuel 2:9

The Lord sees His poor scattered pilgrims travelling through a valley of tears --journeying through a waste-howling wilderness -- a path beset with baits, traps, and snares in every direction.

How can they escape? Why, the Lord 'keeps their feet'. He carries them through every rough place as a tender parent carries a little child. When about to fall, He graciously lays His everlasting arms underneath them. And when tottering and stumbling, and their feet ready to slip, He mercifully upholds them from falling altogether.

But do you think that He has not different ways for different feet? The God of creation has not made two flowers, nor two leaves upon a tree alike, and will He cause all His people to walk in precisely the same path? No. We have . . .each our path, each our troubles, each our trials, each peculiar traps and snares laid for our feet.

And the wisdom of the all-wise God is shown by His eyes being in every place, marking the footsteps of every pilgrim, suiting His remedies to meet their individual case and necessity, appearing for them when nobody else could do them any good, watching so tenderly over them, as though the eyes of His affection were bent on one individual, and carefully noting the goings of each, as though all the powers of the Godhead were concentrated on that one person to keep him from harm!

J C Philpot

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich. (2 Cor.9).

Martin Luther called this verse, "The Great Exchange." What an offer has been given to lost sinners like you and me; our sin for His righteousness. God, who is holy, could not overlook sin, because that would be unjust; nor could he pretend that we didn't sin, because that would be a lie. Thank God there was One, His only Son who voluntarily took all the sin and charges that were against us unto Himself. Could any thing be more amazing? On this Lord's Day, may we reflect on Calvary and its cost -- the preciousness of our salvation.

Jim Comte

EXHORTATION TO PRAY

To the unconverted: Pray that you may be made willing to be converted ... Pray that you may be made very anxious to be converted. Pray that you may be made so anxious as that an unconverted state shall be intolerable to you. Pray that God will teach you what conversion is.

Sayings of John "Rabbi" Duncan

FATHER TO THE FAITHFUL

Abraham is the father of the faithful; and he is also the model of a believer. His faith is recorded that we also may learn from it the nature, energy, trial and victory of faith. How great is this man, called the friend of God, the father of all them that believe, that father of us all (Jews and Gentiles) who trust in the living God.

How great is the honour of Abraham when the apostle says: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." God, who chose him to this eminent position, appointed him also to be to us an example of faith. First, in obeying the call of God, to leave his kindred and to go whither he knew not; secondly, in believing impossibilities, looking away from facts simply to the promise of God; thirdly, in cherishing the Godgiven promise of the land though as yet only a stranger and a pilgrim; fourthly, in sacrificing the visible fulfilment of the promise, believing that God would bring Isaac from the dead.

Abraham's faith was the substance of future things hoped for, and a conviction of things not seen. It triumphed over reason; it laughed at impossibilities; it look beyond death and the long night of the intermediate state; and in all this it gave glory to God; for this is the only glory we can give to God, believing that He can and will do what He promised.

Adolp Saphir (Epistle to the Hebrews)

WISDOM

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding (Proverbs 3:13)

The table mats in the hotel dining room had quotations inscribed on them. One was a saying of Benjamin Franklin: "Life's tragedy is that we grow old too soon and get wise too late." Perhaps we have aspired to change things, to make a difference for good and yet been disappointed as things have not gone our way. Like Solomon we should pray for wisdom. Said Reinhold Niebuhr, a famous theologian: "Lord, help me to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Brian Powlesland

WHAT IS THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH?—PART ONE

The Reformed Presbyterian Church is sadly an obscure church to many today. Depending on where one lives, it might be assumed that the RPC is a split-off from some other more familiar denomination or else a brand-new church. Growing up in Ireland, I remember some people thinking that the RPC split from either the Presbyterian Church in Ireland or the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. In fact, it split from neither. The same mistake can be made in our own community with different denominations. Interestingly, there are others in Ireland, particularly older folk, who know the RPC as the Covenanters. “That’s the Covenanter church,” or “The Covenanters still sing the Psalms.” This nickname is actually quite helpful for us as we seek to understand who we are and why we exist, and can be a very simple way to answer others when they ask these questions. The Reformed Presbyterian Church is the church of the Covenanters.



I would like us to spend some months trying to understand what the Reformed Presbyterian Church is. In this article and the next we must first familiarise ourselves with some of our history. In the articles that follow we will examine what covenants are using the testimony of Scripture. Having done this we can then see in what sense today’s Reformed Presbyterians are Covenanters. All of these considerations are important because if a denomination’s reason for existence is not Scripturally founded then it is guilty of great sin, remembering “that there should be no schism in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25).

The Scottish Presbyterian family tree is both confusing and a tragic history. If you study church history you can seek to analyse the divisions:

- was it right for the Free Church to split from the Church of Scotland in 1843?
- was it right for the Free Presbyterian Church to split from the Free Church in 1893?
- was it right for the Associate Presbyterian Church to split from the Free Presbyterian Church in 1989?
- was it right for the Free Church (Continuing) to split from the Free Church in 2000?

I have my opinions on these events and so might you. If you look at the “family tree” for the Reformed Presbyterian Church, however, you will immediately notice that it was not created from splits along the way. Our history goes back further, particularly to the second Reformation. In order to understand our distinctives, let’s go back one step further again to the First Reformation in Scotland and look at three important dates.

1560 – The key year of the **First Reformation in Scotland**. Mary of Guise, the Catholic Regent Queen, brought in a French army to help crush the Reformation. The French were defeated by the Protestant noblemen with the help of an army from Protestant England. The Reformation Parliament, then free to meet, abolished Roman Catholicism from the Church, repudiated Papal control, and approved a Protestant confession of faith (Scots Confession). The first General Assembly of the Reformed Church met and adopted the First Book of Discipline.

- 6 1581 – **The King’s Confession**. At various times leading up to 1560 groups of Protestants had come together to covenant themselves to the work of Reformation, often at times of crisis. The King’s Confession was one such covenant. It was made amid concerns that the attainments of the First Reformation were being lost and that Scotland was returning to Roman Catholicism. Some enemies of Protestantism would have

restored the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, to the throne, longing for Popery to be fully restored. In response, a covenant was signed uniting the Protestants together to maintain the Reformation. This Covenant was signed by James VI (hence it was called the King's Confession) and was ratified by the General Assembly. The full text of the King's Confession can be read at the conclusion of this article.

1618 – **The Articles of Perth.** Despite having signed the King's Confession, James VI was not true to his vows. He had become King of England in 1603 and aligned himself more with its Episcopal religion. James was a despot and wanted to enforce his own rules on the Reformed Church in Scotland. His policy could be summarised in the words, "no bishop, no king," in other words in order to maintain his rule as king he believed he needed to enforce episcopacy on the Scottish church. He stripped back the freedom of the General Assembly by imprisoning or exiling faithful ministers, and by ensuring the Assembly was made up of those who would vote for his policies. He forced five Roman Catholic/Episcopal practices on the church: (a) kneeling at the Lord's Supper; (b) private baptism; (c) private communion; (d) the observance of holy days; and (e) confirmation.

For the faithful in the Scottish Church, not only were these practices wrong intrinsically, not only were they enforced on the Church improperly, but more than that, they were practices which broke the covenant with God in 1581. As we close this article, we leave a crisis situation. It was necessary therefore for a Second Reformation. We'll see that next time, God willing.

Rev. Stephen McCollum

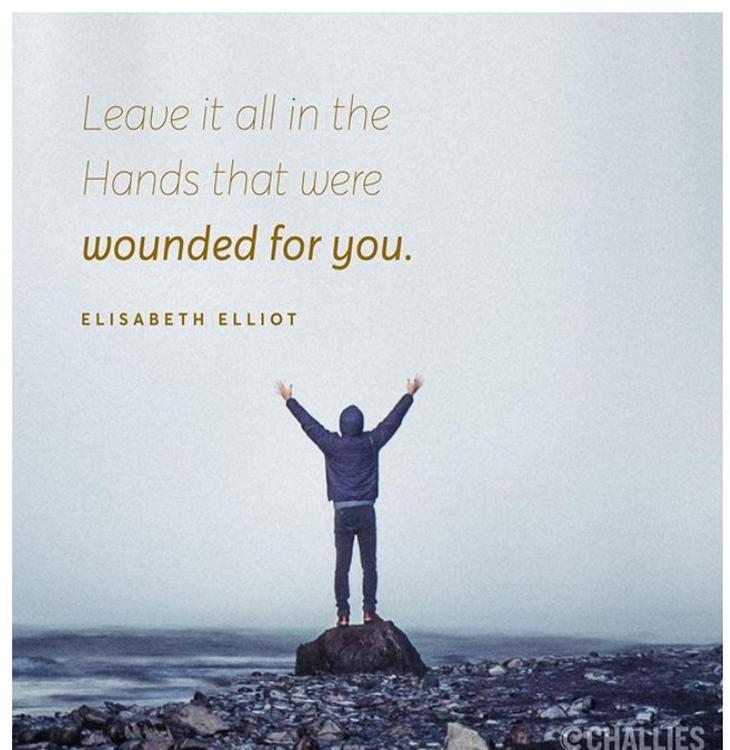
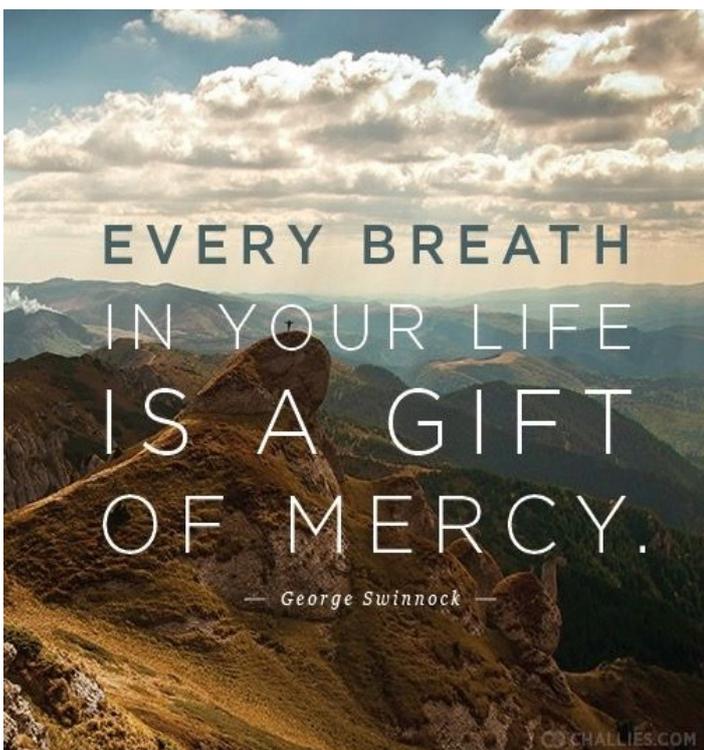
THE KING'S CONFESSION (1581)

We all and every one of us under-written, protest, That, after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God: and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man, which now is, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel; and is received, believed, and defended by many and sundry notable kirks and realms, but chiefly by the kirk of Scotland, the King's Majesty, and three estates of this realm, as God's eternal truth, and only ground of our salvation; as more particularly is expressed in the Confession of our Faith, established and publickly confirmed by sundry acts of Parliaments, and now of a long time hath been openly professed by the King's Majesty, and whole body of this realm both in burgh and land. To the which Confession and Form of Religion we willingly agree in our conscience in all points, as unto God's undoubted truth and verity, grounded only upon his written word. And therefore we abhor and detest all contrary religion and doctrine; but chiefly all kind of Papistry in general and particular heads, even as they are now damned and confuted by the word of God and Kirk of Scotland. But, in special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures of God, upon the kirk, the civil magistrate, and consciences of men; all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our Christian liberty; his erroneous doctrine against the sufficiency of the written word, the perfection of the law, the office of Christ, and his blessed evangel; his corrupted doctrine concerning original sin, our natural inability and rebellion to God's law, our justification by faith only, our imperfect sanctification and obedience to the law; the nature, number, and use of the holy sacraments; his five bastard sacraments, with all his rites, ceremonies, and false doctrine, added to the ministration of the true sacraments without the word of God; his cruel judgment against infants departing without the sacrament; his absolute necessity of baptism; his blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation, or real presence of Christ's body in the elements, and receiving of the same by the wicked, or bodies of men; his dispensations with solemn oaths, perjuries, and degrees of marriage forbidden in the word; his cruelty against the innocent divorced; his devilish mass; his blasphemous priesthood; his profane sacrifice for sins of the dead and the quick; his canonization of men; calling upon angels or saints departed, worshipping of imagery, relicks, and crosses; dedicating of kirks, altars, days; vows to creatures; his purgatory, prayers for the dead; praying or speaking in a strange language, with his processions, and blasphemous litany, and multitude of advocates or mediators; his manifold orders, auricular confession; his desperate and uncertain repentance; his general and doubtful faith; his satisfaction of men for their sins; his justification by works, *opus operatum*, works of supererogation, merits, pardons, peregrinations, and stations; his holy water, baptizing of bells, conjuring of spirits, crossing, sayning, anointing, conjuring, hallowing of God's good creatures, with the superstitious opinion joined therewith; his worldly monarchy, and wicked hierarchy; his three solemn vows, with all his

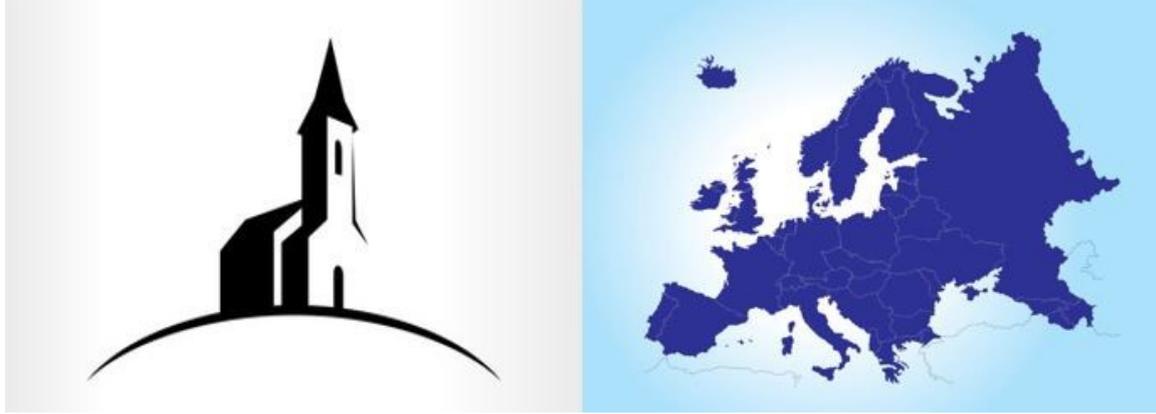
shavelings of sundry sorts; his erroneous and bloody decrees made at Trent, with all the subscribers or approvers of that cruel and bloody band, conjured against the kirk of God. And finally, we detest all his vain allegories, rites, signs, and traditions brought in the kirk, without or against the word of God, and doctrine of this true reformed kirk; to the which we join ourselves willingly, in doctrine, faith, religion, discipline, and use of the holy sacraments, as lively members of the same in Christ our head: promising and swearing, by the great name of the LORD our GOD, that we shall continue in the obedience of the doctrine and discipline of this kirk, and shall defend the same, according to our vocation and power, all the days of our lives; under the pains contained in the law, and danger both of body and soul in the day of God's fearful judgment.

And seeing that many are stirred up by Satan, and that Roman Antichrist, to promise, swear, subscribe, and for a time use the holy sacraments in the kirk deceitfully, against their own conscience; minding hereby, first, under the external cloak of religion, to corrupt and subvert secretly God's true religion within the kirk; and afterward, when time may serve, to become open enemies and persecutors of the same, under vain hope of the Pope's dispensation, devised against the word of God, to his greater confusion, and their double condemnation in the day of the Lord Jesus: we therefore, willing to take away all suspicion of hypocrisy, and of such double dealing with God, and his kirk, protest, and call the Searcher of all hearts for witness, that our minds and hearts do fully agree with this our Confession, promise, oath, and subscription: so that we are not moved with any worldly respect, but are persuaded only in our conscience, through the knowledge and love of God's true religion imprinted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, as we shall answer to him in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.

And because we perceive, that the quietness and stability of our religion and kirk doth depend upon the safety and good behaviour of the King's Majesty, as upon a comfortable instrument of God's mercy granted to this country, for the maintaining of his kirk, and ministration of justice amongst us; we protest and promise with our hearts, under the same oath, hand-writ, and pains, that we shall defend his person and authority with our goods, bodies, and lives, in the defence of Christ, his evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies within this realm or without, as we desire our God to be a strong and merciful defender to us in the day of our death, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory eternally. *Amen.*



THE CHURCH IN EUROPE



“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”” (Acts 16:9)

The account of the birth of the church at Philippi is one of the most extensive accounts of church planting in the New Testament. Paul had intended to devote his second missionary journey to Asia. However, when Paul and his companions had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia,” and when they tried to go into Bithynia, “the Spirit did not permit them.” (Acts 16:6-7). As they came to Troas, “a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”” (Acts 16:9)

The history of the church would bear out similar examples of God either forbidding in one direction, or, on the other hand, constraining in another direction. Famously, before arriving in Africa, David Livingstone wanted to go to China as a medical missionary. However, the political friction between Britain and China due to the opium war prevented that. Similarly, Adoniram Judson, the American missionary to Burma, first travelled to India, but was driven out as American evangelism was not welcome.

The Gospel Reaching Europe

Through a series of open and closed doors Paul concluded that the Lord was calling them to take the Gospel westward into Europe, and, with that, they arrived in Philippi, Macedonia.

It may have been the case that the Gospel had reached Europe prior to the arrival of Paul and Timothy in Macedonia. Amongst the crowds on the day of Pentecost, as Peter preached to the multitudes in Jerusalem, were “visitors from Rome” (Acts 2:10). It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the Gospel may have reached Rome as a result, although this is not recorded in Scripture. Either way, Paul and his companions’ arrival in Macedonia was a major milestone in the fulfilment of the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:20).

The First Church in Europe

As God guided Paul and his companions to Macedonia, specifically to Philippi, a number of individuals were brought to faith through the preaching of the Gospel. Here, in Philippi, the first church in Europe was established.

The first convert in Philippi seems to be Lydia, who as a businesswoman sold purple fabrics. In response to the Gospel which Paul proclaimed, we are simply told that the Lord, “opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:14). Lydia immediately evidenced the fruit of her conversion by insisting that they stay at her home. The significance of this may be lost on us, but in such a circumstance, where Paul and the others were preachers in a strange country, Lydia’s hospitality provided them with both comfort and a measure of protection.

They then encountered a demon possessed slave girl, who “brought her masters much profit by fortune telling” (Acts 16:16). She followed Paul and his companions, crying out and alerting all within earshot as to who they were: “these men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). In response we read: “But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour” (Acts 16:18). The slave girl was delivered from her bondage. Though she may have rejoiced, her owners did not. Their whole business had collapsed and they had lost considerable wealth. In response, they had Paul and Silas seized and cast into prison.

Finally, as Paul and Silas were in prison for preaching the Gospel, at midnight an earthquake shook the prison and opened all the doors, and everyone’s chains were loosed (Acts 16:26-27). The jailor, expecting all the prisoners to have fled, was convinced that this meant not merely the end of his job, but of his life. He was about to kill himself. Then he heard Paul’s words: “do yourself no harm, for we are all here” (Acts 16:28). The famous exchange of words followed as the jailor asked “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Hearing the good news in response: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:30-31). The jailor rejoiced and believed, washed their wounds, and brought Paul and Silas to his house.

What can we learn from the establishment of the church in Philippi? The three Philippian converts had very little in common. The first was a Jew, the second a Greek, and the third a Roman. Yet the unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the foundation of the church in Philippi, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28).

Furthermore, the church in Philippi was established through an emphasis on the Word of God. Much of the modern church has lost confidence in the Word of God, choosing to water it down, remove the offense, and place their emphasis on gimmicks - at the expense of the preached Word. Paul and his companions were powerful, Spirit-filled men who spoke with conviction, boldness, confidence and assurance. They didn’t spend their time engaging in social events or working on strategies to make the Gospel more palatable. Rather, they boldly and unashamedly proclaimed the Gospel, knowing that the Gospel of Christ is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). They knew that His word would not return unto Him void (Isaiah 55:11) and that it is Him who that gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7).

The Effects of the Gospel Reaching Europe

Having reached Philippi, the Gospel would eventually spread throughout Europe. The Gospel not only reached our own shores, but in turn reached throughout the world through missionaries who went to proclaim the Gospel in places such as Africa, China and India. This is something we should be profoundly thankful for.

On this point John Stott commented: “With the benefit of hindsight, knowing that Europe became the first Christian continent and was until fairly recently the main base for missionary outreach to the rest of the world, we can see what an epoch-making development this was. It was from Europe that in due course the gospel fanned out to the great continents of Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America and Oceania, and so reached the ends of the earth.”¹

The Church in Europe Today

Were you to take a tour throughout Europe, you would find many beautiful, historic church buildings. Tragically, many of these churches are either no longer places of worship or no longer proclaim the Gospel. The church at large in Europe has over many years become increasingly liberal, as liberal theology has greatly hurt and hollowed out the church.

Europe was the birthplace of the Reformation and the centre of Christian influence for hundreds of years. However, the attainments of the Reformation have been lost to the point that the Reformation is largely seen as having been unnecessary, or even a negative development. Indeed, many consider there to be little meaningful difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

Having said that, God has His faithful remnant in his Church throughout Europe. No doubt, there are many small but faithful gatherings of his Church, unbeknown to us. Whilst thankfully the Gospel is experiencing growth in Asia and Africa, it is no exaggeration to say that Europe has become a spiritual wilderness experiencing a famine of the Word.

A Vision for Europe

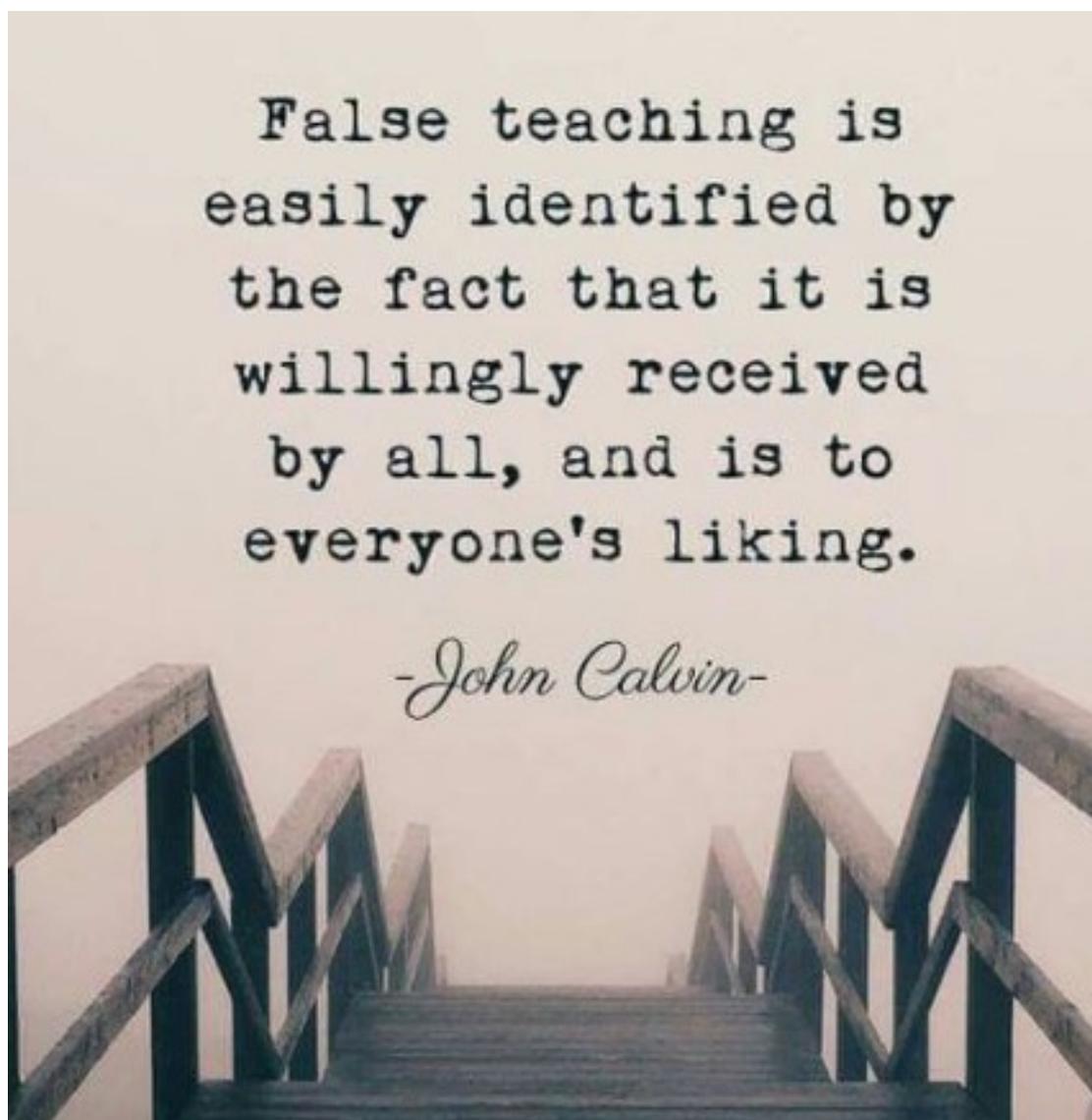
When the man of Macedonia appeared to Paul in the vision he was crying out for the Gospel. In much the same way, the Church today ought to have a vision for that same Europe in great darkness and in much need of the Gospel.

What spiritual and practical support can we offer to the Church in Europe? We ought to pray that the Gospel and the preaching of it may have free course throughout Europe once again so that the Lord would set up lights throughout this dark continent. Furthermore, we ought to pray that the Lord establish the work of the hands of the faithful churches that do exist throughout Europe (Psalm 90:17).

Whilst Europe is currently experiencing a period of great political and economic turmoil its greatest need is the Gospel faithfully taught throughout its length and breadth. The Church needs to embrace and preach the same Reformation doctrines which impacted the world all these years ago. The lost need to hear the same Gospel of Jesus Christ which Lydia, the slave girl and the Jailor heard, that sinners would cry out with the blessed jailor: “what must I do to be saved?”

SM

1 Stott, John, The Message of Acts, p. 28



Children's Corner



Dear Children

Last month in our congregation we celebrated the Lord's Supper. Do you know what it was all about? You would have seen some of our congregation sitting apart from the rest and taking bread and wine. Why? I will try to explain to you briefly and simply.

In the Old Testament the Children of Israel celebrated the Passover every year. This was a feast in which they remembered how they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. Instructions for observing this feast had been given to them. You can read these in Exodus chapter 12. Every year when they celebrated the Passover the children were encouraged to ask: What does this service mean? I hope you also want to know why we have the Lord's Supper.

In the New Testament Jesus also kept the Passover feast but on the night in which He was betrayed, at the end of the Passover meal, he instituted, or set up, the Lord's Supper showing his disciples that from then on this celebration was to replace the Passover. In the Lord's Supper they were to remember His suffering and death on the Cross in a very simple way. He took bread, broke it and gave it to them. He then took the cup of wine and also gave it to them telling them that these were symbols of how His body was to be broken and His blood shed on the Cross to deliver them from sin and its consequences. He finished up by saying: "This do in remembrance of Me." Read about it in the Gospels – Matthew chapter 26; Mark chapter 14; Luke chapter 22. You can also read in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 where the Apostle Paul tells how the Lord Jesus had also given him this command.

Now have you wondered why only some people go to the Lord's Table? Well, think. Who are the ones who truly remember and appreciate what the Lord Jesus has done for them by His death? Is it not those who love Him and trust in Him as their Saviour that will remember Him and think of Him in a loving way? He means so much to them that they can't but remember Him. Also, they are not afraid or ashamed to let others know what He has done for them. The Lord's Supper is a very special feast for them. They have a very special time thinking about Christ's love for them, why He suffered so much, what He delivered them from and also the wonderful benefits that are now theirs not just in this world but also awaiting them in heaven. The bread and the wine are symbols to help them understand all that. The bread NEVER changes into anything other than bread and the wine NEVER changes into anything other than wine. The bread is to remind them of Christ's body broken for them and the wine is to remind them of Christ's blood shed for them. They are also symbols assuring them that, as truly as they eat the bread and drink the wine, the blessings of salvation are theirs by faith. It is only those who believe in the Lord Jesus that are saved and He assures them that "none perish who trust in Him".

Is it any wonder then that the Lord's people look forward to this special time in the congregation? Now what about yourselves? Do you love the Lord Jesus? Does Christ's death on the Cross mean anything to you? If it does, don't be afraid or ashamed to tell others. Rather, be like David in Psalm 66 when he said:

"All that fear God, come, hear, I'll tell
What He did for my soul."

My prayer for you all is that you will experience this wonderful salvation and that you will be His messengers telling others about it. If He has done so much for us why shouldn't we do something for Him? Doesn't He deserve it? CT Studd, a well known Christian missionary to China, and also a famous cricketer, wrote the following words:

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great to make for Him." Make that your motto too. He also wrote a poem which you will find on Google and each verse ends with these words:

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past
Only what's done for Christ will last."

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Remember that too.

May God bless you all,

With my love, Granny M