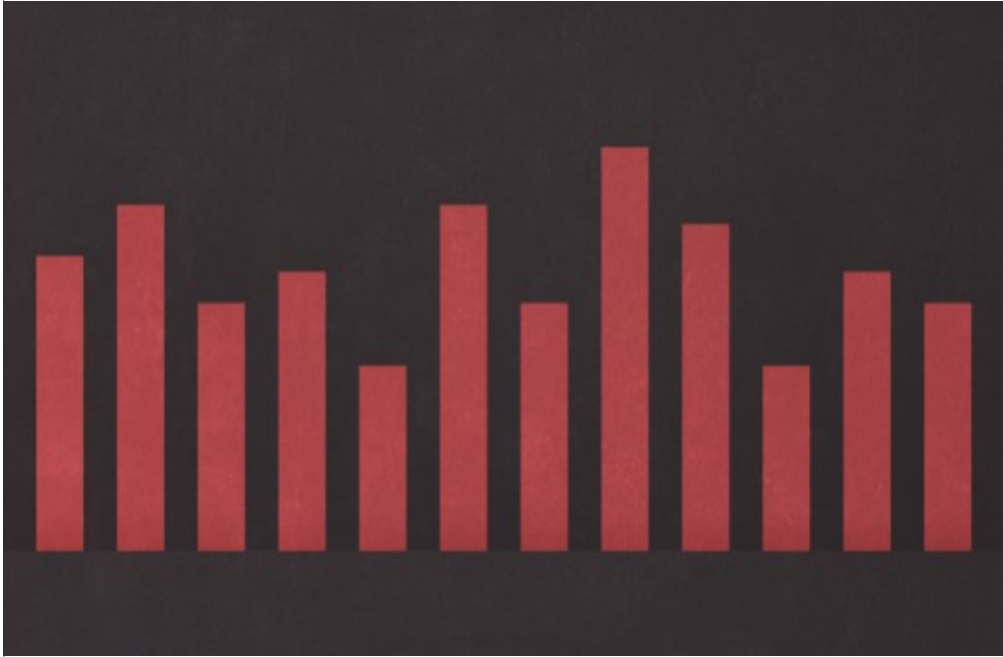




## July 2019 Newsletter



### 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  
Bridge Community Centre  
Bayhead Embankment  
Stornoway, Isle of Lewis,  
Scotland, HS1 2EB

[www.stornowayrpcs.org](http://www.stornowayrpcs.org)

[info@stornowayrpcs.org](mailto:info@stornowayrpcs.org)

Scottish Charity No: SC043043

## WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

Today, our family visited Eyam, known as the “Plague Village”. In 1665, a tailor opened a box of fabric he had ordered from London. The fabric was ridden with fleas which were carrying the plague. 1665 was the year of the “Black Death” in London, and its effects there are well known. Less familiar is the story of how this same pestilence affected villagers hundreds of miles away, and the death rate was even severer. For example, one woman buried six children and her husband within eight days.

The local rector William Mompesson enlisted help from the former minister, the Puritan Thomas Stanley, in order to control the spread of the disease. Stanley, a man of conviction, had been ousted from his charge by refusing to acknowledge the Act of Uniformity. Many of the villagers remained loyal to their former minister and distrusted Mompesson who had been forced on them. Together, Mompesson and Stanley persuaded the people to voluntarily quarantine the village, thereby preventing spread of the plague to other towns and, at the same time, effectively sealing the fate of Eyam.

This tragic tale perhaps leads us to think of a spiritual lesson. There is a greater plague, a plague of the heart, that of original sin and natural corruption. It is the duty of the minister to warn, seeking to bring conviction, not so that sinners may be quarantined to prevent the spread of iniquity, rather that they might turn from their sin to Christ and live.

Let us never forget how sin is a pestilence to our souls, dooming many to a lost eternity. See how it is infectious: a little sin here and it spreads there. Just as during the Great Plague people wore nosebags filled with aromatic herbs to mask the overwhelming stench, so too today people try just about anything to avoid thinking about the eternal consequences of their sin. But transgression, suffering, and death is all around us; it can't be ignored. The best way to stop the infection is to spread the cure – the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

Stephen

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## NEWS & EVENTS

### RPCNA SYNOD 2019

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) Synod and the Associate Presbyterian Church (ARP) Synod met concurrently on the campus of Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Penn., June 11-13, 2019. The meeting began its first day with a joint worship service with. Pastor Gabriel Fluhrer (First ARP, Columbia, S.C.) spoke on the text, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

In its synod meeting, the RPCNA heard a report from its Study Committee on Divorce and Desertion, which had been created in 2017 in response to a Synod paper from Atlantic Presbytery related to some Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary communications on divorce and desertion. The seminary responded to this paper, and last year the work was given back to the committee with some alteration. This year the committee asked Synod to affirm its interpretation that “the word ‘departing’ [in the RP Testimony] explains that desertion refers to an unbelieving spouse physically leaving the believing spouse and departing to live elsewhere.”

There was lengthy debate about the recommendation, including whether to pass it as-is, whether it was too simplistic, whether it met the assignment Synod had given the committee, or whether it might cause harm through misinterpretation. The committee and many others contended that it was important for the committee and Synod to respond to the assignment in this precise and basic way, knowing that sessions and presbyteries can, and do, apply this and related statements from the standards to individual situations. In the end, the committee recommendation lost, 47–90, and the committee was dismissed.

A Special Committee on Christ's Mediatorial Kingship was begun in 2014. The committee this year recommended that a booklet called “Christ-Centered Voting: A Practical Guide for Bible-Believing Christians” be published by

Crown & Covenant in sufficient time for the next U.S. presidential election. The initial recommendation of adopting the booklet ran into vigorous debate. Several amended recommendations were attempted but failed, such as that the booklet first be circulated to the churches for feedback to the committee.

Much of the debate dealt with how to characterize Synod's affirmation of this booklet—whether to receive, approve, or adopt it, or whether to send it back to the committee for further work. This matter created the longest debate thus far in the week. Ultimately the committee's request that the booklet be adopted or approved lost when an amendment passed (67–59) to change the word to “receive.” The new motion then passed overwhelmingly. The committee's recommendation about working with Crown & Covenant to publish the booklet passed, 69–55. The committee was continued.

The concurrent synods afforded the opportunity on Wednesday afternoon to have similar ministries share about their work in various workshops. Five workshops were offered, and ARP and RP delegates could choose three of the one-hour sessions during the afternoon: Geneva College and Erskine College, RP Seminary and Erskine Seminary, RP Education & Publication and ARP Christian Education Ministry & Magazine, RP Global Missions and ARP World Witness, RP Home Missions and ARP Outreach North America

Beginning the evening session, the Board of Trustees of the Theological Seminary reported to the Synod. This is the 209th year for the seminary and the first year of Dr. Barry York's presidency. There were 44 RP students in the past year, 6 of whom were seniors and graduated with MDiv or MTS degrees. Librarian Tom Reid is to retire from full-time work this year. New professor of church history, David Whitla, will begin serving soon. A new professor of New Testament is being recommended to the Synod, Pastor Jeff Stivason. Synod set aside time to interview him this evening, after hearing his testimony.

Communication 19-1 proposes that past actions of Synod no longer be part of the law and order of the RPCNA, as they currently are (Directory for Church Government). It argues that it has been impossible for synods and sessions to know and consider 220 years of Synod actions when making each decision. What's more, how past Synod actions are to be weighted alongside the Constitution is not explained. This provision creates a loophole, the committee said, where any given Synod can make a decision altering the law and order without having to send the decision down in overture to the sessions. The committee's recommendation would have changed the constitutional wording to read that “past actions of the Synod are treated as historical examples and valuable counsel.” After some debate, including concerns raised about the potentially wide implications of such a change, Synod decided not to vote on the recommendation this year and instead referred the matter to a three-man study committee.

Communication 19-2 intended to ease a requirement on someone who seeks to file a complaint of a church court action, such that they would need to indicate their intent to file within 30 days rather than indicate it immediately. This came through Presbytery of the Alleghenies in response to a paper. Synod agreed to make the change. At the end of the evening, a prayer time led by Matthew Dyck and Doug Chamberlain from St. Lawrence Presbytery commenced on the topics that had come before Synod, along with two pressing matters brought to Synod's attention.

**Drew Gordon, Editor of the Reformed Presbyterian Witness**





## GLEANINGS BY BILL LUCAS

### GRACE: THE KEYWORD OF CHRISTIANITY

It is often said, and with perfect truth, that the central theme of the Bible is salvation. Had there been no salvation planned and put into operation by God for the redemption of sinful men, then it is highly unlikely that there would have been a biblical revelation to man at all. The existence of biblical revelation itself implies a prior purpose of salvation and indicates to us that the Bible has been given, quite literally, as a Manual of Salvation. So it is not strange that salvation should be the central theme, the great burden, of the Bible's message to man.

But the salvation of the Bible is of a unique and special kind. There is nothing among men, not even in their religion, which compares with it. To know this salvation is to learn that, strictly speaking, it belongs to an order all its own. There is nothing which gives us a perfect comparison; nothing of which it can be said with total truth, "That is what it is like!"

We are not surprised to learn therefore that the Bible uses a very special family of words to describe and define various aspects of salvation; the uniqueness of salvation requires it to be so. What may surprise us that there is one particular word frequently used in the Bible to convey to the reader the nature and character of salvation. Without this word - the word "grace" -- the true nature of biblical salvation would never be understood properly.

So crucial is this one word to the understanding of salvation that it provides a "seed bed" out of which grows the Bible's theology of salvation. All the major doctrines of the faith root back into it. It is, in many ways, the keyword of Christianity.

Without some understanding of it the gospel of salvation remains an enigma. If it is used as the interpretative key, the gospel unfolds itself with perennial freshness and penetrating power. The word grace carries with it solemn implications for our destiny and therefore demands our close attention.

The gospel of the grace of God is the central message of the Bible, and the key factor in the Christian experience of salvation. There can be absolutely no question but that the love of God for sinners is the mainstay of every Christian life as it is nourished and directed by the teaching of the Bible.

**Professor J Douglas Macmillan (The God of All Grace)**

### THE PURE WORD

Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it (Psalm 119:140)

The Word of God is absolutely pure, free from any kind of distortion, error or contradiction. It also has a purifying effect upon those who read it prayerfully, regularly and systematically. Many shy away from reading it because it can be painful as it draws attention to our sins, failures and disobedience. However, it can bring washing and cleansing to us as we embrace its message and surrender to its truth through faith in Jesus Christ.

## ON HIM THEY LAID THE CROSS

On Him they laid the cross, that He might bear it after Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

We see in Simon's carrying the cross a picture of the work of the Church throughout all generations; she is the cross-bearer after Jesus. Mark then, Christian, Jesus does not suffer so as to exclude your suffering. He bears a cross, not that you may escape it, but that you may endure it. Christ exempts you from sin, but not from sorrow. Remember that, and expect to suffer. But let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that in our case, as in Simon's, it is not our cross, but Christ's cross which we carry.

When you are molested for your piety; when your religion brings the trial of cruel mockings upon you, then remember it is not your cross, it is Christ's cross; and how delightful is it to carry the cross of our Lord Jesus! You carry the cross after Him. You have blessed company; your path is marked with the footprints of your Lord. The mark of His blood-red shoulder is upon that heavy burden. 'Tis His cross, and He goes before you as a shepherd goes before his sheep.

Take up your cross daily, and follow Him. Do not forget, also, that you bear this cross in partnership. It is the opinion of some that Simon only carried one end of the cross, and not the whole of it. That is very possible; Christ may have carried the heavier part, against the transverse beam, and Simon may have borne the lighter end. Certainly it is so with you; you do but carry the light end of the cross, Christ bore the heavier end.

And remember, though Simon had to bear the cross for a very little while, it gave him lasting honour. Even so the cross we carry is only for a little while at most, and then we shall receive the crown, the glory. Surely we should love the cross, and, instead of shrinking from it, count it very dear, when it works out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

**CH Spurgeon**

## PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION

Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption (Ps. 130:7)

He did not bid them hope in the Lord because they were the seed of Abraham, the peculiar people of God, made partakers of privileges above all the people in the world; much less because of their worthiness in themselves; but merely on account of mercy in God. The mercy of God, and the redemption that is with him, is the only ground to sinners for hope and confidence.

Two points should be noticed in this grace, the one expressed, the other implied. The fact is that it is plenteous, abundant. What principally discourages distressed souls from a comfortable waiting on God is their fears lest they should not obtain mercy from him, and that because their sins are so great and so many, or attended with such aggravations, that it is impossible they should find acceptance with God. This ground of despondency and unbelief the Psalmist removes by representing the fullness, the plenty, the boundless plenty of the mercy of God. It is such as will suit the condition of the greatest sinners in their greatest depths; the stores of its treasures are inexhaustible.

The second is the implication in the word itself, of the relation which the goodness and grace of God have to the blood of Christ; whence it is called redemption. This has respect to a price; the price whereby we are bought, that is, the blood of Christ. This is that whereby a way is made for the exercise of mercy towards sinners; redemption, which properly denotes actual deliverance, is said to be with God, or in him, as the effect in cause. The causes of it are his own grace, and the blood of Christ, prepared for the redeeming of believers from sin and trouble to his own glory. And herein lies the encouragement ... nothing but God himself can give us confidence to go to Him.

**John Owen**

## WHAT IS THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH? —PART FIVE

In the last article we established that there are sufficient grounds to believe that covenanting is a duty still required of the church and nations today. The commands of God’s Word and the nature of the continuity between Old and New Testaments require it. In order to reinforce the foregoing argument, we will look at both the examples and promises concerning covenanting in Scripture.

### (I) - EXAMPLES OF COVENANTING

How gracious is our God that He did not only give us a book of laws, statutes, judgements, and ordinances! He has reinforced these lessons with many historical accounts, including both failures and victories in the Christian life. “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition...” (1 Cor. 10:11).

We can learn a lot about covenanting from various precedents in the Biblical narrative. In fact, many of the high-points for Israel were at times of covenanting with the Lord. These accounts are not merely laid down as history, but are for admonition to today’s duty.

#### (A) MOSES (DEUTERONOMY 29)

In this chapter, Moses renews the covenant with the people of Israel in Moab, “besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.” The circumstances favour covenant renewal because the people are on the cusp of entering the Promised Land. Notice how the covenant is grounded in the gracious salvation of God (v2-8). “**Therefore** keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.” (v9). When a church or nation covenants with God it is a response to God’s grace; not a legalistic endeavour to earn merit with God.

Why was it necessary? Everyone is subject to the law of God whether they covenant or not. But it is by covenanting that a people formally take God to be their God, “that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and that He may be God to you” (v13). Notice who took the covenant, “All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives—also the stranger who is in your camp” (v10-11).

#### (B) JOSHUA (JOSHUA 24)

When Israel possessed the land, the covenant was renewed under Joshua at Shechem. Once again, the vows are grounded in the Gospel, particularly the signal act of salvation in the Old Testament – the Exodus – but more recent acts of God’s grace are also added as motivation to covenant with God.

In response, the people vow to serve the Lord and solemnly reaffirm it, “No, but we will serve the Lord!” (v21). Now let’s be clear: if Israel had not covenanted at this stage in Shechem, and had gone on to disobey God, they would have been guilty. But they renew the covenant nonetheless, binding themselves voluntarily to obedience. Fresh instances of God’s grace (or our failures) require renewal of our covenants with God.

#### (C) ASA (2 CHRONICLES 15)

As one of the reforming kings, Asa was used of God to turn Judah from apostasy back towards God. When a nation needs reformation, it is right to solemnly covenant to do this work. Asa hears the encouragement and sobering warning of the Lord by His prophet Azariah, “The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (v2). He is exhorted to “be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!” (v7). Asa assembles the people to covenant with God, but notice it is not just those from his domain in Judah, but also the great numbers who came over from the northern kingdom of Israel (v9). The unity that these believers would experience was not merely in a common history or language, but in a common faith, particularly in a mutual covenant with the Lord. Such a threefold cord is not easily broken. If we are to have unity among the Reformed churches today, it should be on the basis of solemn covenant.

“And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around” (v15).

Notice how the covenant was further renewed under Jehoida (2 Kings 11:17) and Josiah (2 Kings 23:3). In the first case, since God removed a wicked ruler from over His people they band together in solemn covenant, led by Jehoida, the High Priest. In the second case, in response to the rediscovery of the Law of God, young King Josiah leads the nation in their vows, “and all the people took a stand for the covenant.” See also Nehemiah 9-10 for the covenant renewal after the return from exile, particularly see how confession of sin is a proper component of covenanting.

In conclusion, these examples give us a taste for the practice of covenanting in the Old Testament church and nation of Israel. (i) Basis of covenanting: it is grounded in the Gospel and not a legalistic work. (ii) Occasion of covenanting: at key moments of history, before reformation, after God’s acts of deliverances, in response to rediscovering the Word, etc. (iii) Nature of covenanting: taken willingly, by the full extent of church and nation, with confession of sin, a time of great joy, etc.

## (II) - PROMISES ABOUT COVENANTING

Although the duty of covenanting is less clearly seen in the New Testament, Scripture is not silent about covenanting in New Testament times, rather it gives us predictions of times in which public covenanting will occur. I will evince two passages, although there are others.

### A) Isaiah 19:18

*In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.*

This prophecy refers to Gospel days (“in that day”) when the news of the Messiah will go out abroad. Five Egyptian cities, the enemies of God’s people, will speak the language of Canaan – not by learning Hebrew (i.e. not a prophecy about Gentile ministry students!) but by learning a spiritual language (one of repentance, faith, and that seeks to magnify Christ – a language learned through a new birth). These cities (not representing simply Egyptians in general, but cities officially) swear by the Lord of Hosts, or covenant with Him. Does this prophecy not encourage us to expect enemy nations to be turned by God’s grace and kiss the Son?

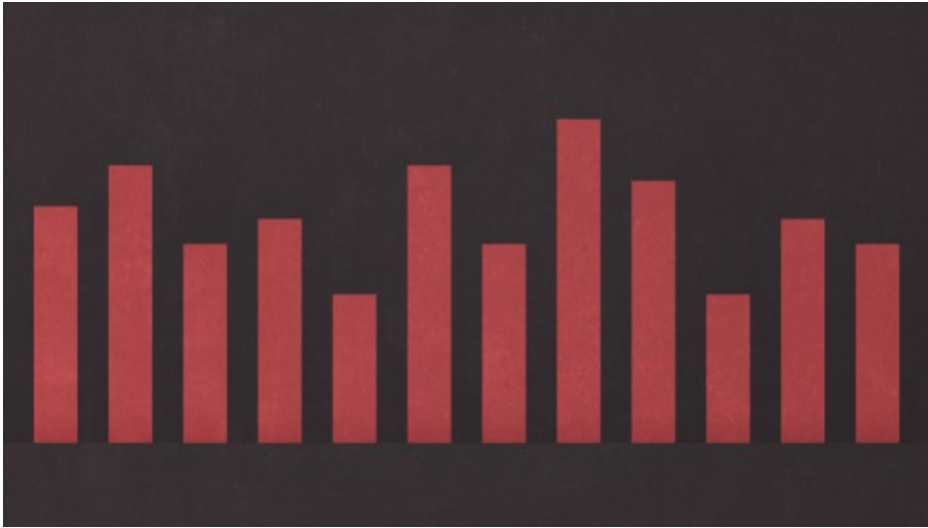
### B) Jeremiah 50:5

*“In those days and in that time,” says the Lord, “the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it saying, “Come let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten.”*

In one sense, this prophecy speaks of the return of the exiles from Babylon, yet there is more to it. It speaks of the Gospel age when the Gentiles will make their way to Jerusalem, not physically but spiritually, by covenanting with God forevermore. If this prophesy can be taken for the bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles to the church, then it is right that this New Testament time period is one characterised by voluntary covenanting amongst the Gentiles, just as ancient Israel did in the Old Testament.

In conclusion, the Law gives us the warrant for covenanting, the historical books set before us how covenanting is to be done, and the prophets give us the hope for the New Testament era that there shall be covenanting. Taking together our historical study (Reformed Presbyterians have consistently stood “For Christ’s Crown and Covenant”, i.e. the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant) and our theological study (covenanting is warranted by the Scriptures), we are left with the question – are these historical covenants still relevant to Scotland today?

## ARE THERE DEGREES OF SIN?



Historically speaking, both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism have understood that there are degrees of sin. The Roman Catholic church makes a distinction between mortal and venial sin. The point of that distinction is that there are some sins so gross, heinous, and serious that the actual commission of those sins is mortal in the sense that it kills the grace of justification that resides in the soul of the believer. In their theology, not every sin is devastating to that degree. There are some real sins that are venial sins. These are less serious sins in terms of their consequences, but they don't have the justification-killing capacity that mortal sins have.

Many evangelical Protestants have rejected the idea of degrees of sin because they know that the Protestant Reformation rejected the Roman Catholic distinction between mortal and venial sins. As a result, they've jumped to the conclusion that there are no distinctions between sins in Protestantism.

We should return to the views of the Reformers themselves. John Calvin was an outspoken critic of the Roman Catholic Church and their distinction between mortal and venial sin. Calvin said that all sin is mortal in the sense that it deserves death. The book of James reminds us, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (James 2:10). Even the slightest sin is an act of cosmic treason. We fail to feel the gravity of our actions to this degree, but it is true.

When I sin, I choose my will over the will of God Almighty. By implication I'm essentially saying that I'm more intelligent, wise, righteous, and powerful than God Himself. Calvin said that all sin is mortal in the sense that God could justifiably destroy each of us for the smallest sin we've committed. In fact, the penalty for sin was given the first day of human creation: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Yet God doesn't deal with us always according to justice. He deals with us according to grace, He allows us to live, and He moves to bring about our redemption. Calvin said that all sins are mortal in that we deserve death from them but that no sin is mortal in the sense that it can destroy our saving grace. We have to repent, yes, but the justifying grace that the Holy Spirit brings to us is not killed by our sin. Calvin and every one of the Reformers strenuously maintained that there is a difference between lesser sins and what they called gross and heinous sins.

This distinction is important for Christians to understand so that we can learn to live charitably with each other. The sin of pettiness, by which people begin to dwell on minor transgressions in the community, can tear the body of Christ apart. Great damage comes when it is fuelled by the fire of gossip and slander. We are called to patience and tolerance towards the struggling failures of other Christians. It's not that we're called to be lax on sin, for there are certain sins listed in the New Testament that are serious and ought not be allowed in the church. Adultery is serious. Incest calls for ecclesiastical discipline. Drunkenness, murder, and fornication are repeatedly mentioned. These sins are so destructive that they call forth church discipline when they are manifested.



It's clear that we have different degrees of sin when we consider the warnings of Scripture. There are at least twenty-two references in the New Testament to degrees of rewards that are given to the saints in heaven. There are different levels, different rewards, and different roles in heaven. The Bible warns us against adding to the severity of our judgment. Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin" (John 19:11). Jesus measures and evaluates guilt, and with the greater guilt and greater responsibility comes the greater judgment. It's a motif that permeates the New Testament.

The idea of gradation of sin and reward is based upon God's justice. If I commit twice as many sins as another person, justice demands that the punishment fits the crime. If I've been twice as virtuous as another person, justice demands that I get more of a reward. God tells us that entrance into heaven will be only on the basis of the merit of Christ, but once we get to heaven, rewards will be dispensed according to works. Those who have been abundant in good works will receive an abundant reward. Those who have been derelict and negligent in good works will have a small reward in heaven. By the same token, those who have been grievous enemies of God will have severe torments in hell. Those who have been less hostile will have a lesser punishment at the hands of God. He is perfectly just, and when He judges, He will take into account all of the extenuating circumstances. Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak" (Matt. 12:36).

Why is it important for us to emphasize this point? Many times I've talked to men who struggle with lust and they say to themselves or to me, "I might as well go ahead and commit adultery because I'm already guilty of lust. I can't be in any worse shape in the sight of God, so I might as well finish the deed." I always answer, "Oh yes, you can be in much worse shape." The judgment of actual adultery will be much more severe than the judgment upon lust. God will deal with us at that level, and it's a foolish thing for a person who has committed a misdemeanour, to therefore say, "I'm already guilty; I might as well make it a felony." God forbid that we should think like that. If we do, we face the righteous judgment of God. We must keep this in mind as we seek to build a Christian conscience and a Christian character.

**RC Sproul, Ligonier Blog**

It is not the absence  
of sin **but the grieving  
over it** which  
distinguishes the child  
of God from empty  
professors.

A.W. Pink



If there is no fire  
in the pulpit, **it  
falls to you** to  
kindle it in the  
pews.

B.B. Warfield



## WHY FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION IS A BIBLICAL PRIORITY

In our digital world, relationships have also become digital. Sometimes this brings the benefit of making those who are far away near but it can also have the disbenefit of making those who are near, far away. Sometimes we see people in the same physical space but they are in their own digital worlds. It can also be easier to use electronic forms of communication when personal interaction would be possible. Why meet up with one friend when you can chat to multiple friends by simultaneous text conversations? But we miss tone, expression, body language, touch and presence. Some studies have concluded that technology has had a negative effect on both the quality and quantity of face-to-face communication. But it's more than a social problem, because we're speaking about a biblical priority.

The Bible gives considerable emphasis to face-to-face communication. It speaks of open and unhindered interaction. In two short letters the apostle John shows the superiority of face-to-face meeting over "paper and ink" (2 John 12; 3 John 13). It is rather startling when we pause to think deeply about who was writing and what he was writing. Writing was useful in the meantime but it was not the best means. It was limited not in mere terms of efficiency but in communicating their love in Christ. Being able to "speak face to face" would make their joy full.

He could write his teaching about the faith but there was no substitute for being able to come to them. Then he could instruct them more fully in a way that would make their spiritual joy full. It reminds us also that audio as well as written sermons are ultimately no substitute for being present at a sermon. No internet preacher can replace the personal concern, awareness and prayers of a pastor who looks into your eyes and situation when he declares God's Word. When God's people meet together it also encourages one another (Hebrews 10:24-27). Live sharing and live-streaming a service are not the same thing.

Face-to-face interaction is also an emphasis in the letters of Paul. Twice in the same letter he expresses his desire to "see" the "face" of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thessalonians 2:17). He didn't just desire it, he did everything he could do to make it happen. It was something that was so important to him that he was praying night and day it might happen (1 Thessalonians 3:10). His earnest desire and intention to see them is clear. He even uses the language of bereavement ("being taken from you") to express his grief. Why did he want to be present with them? Because there was something lacking that needed to be made up through preaching to them and conversing with them personally. There were things he still needed to teach them. James Fergusson reflects on these expressions in this updated extract.

### 1—CHRIST'S PEOPLE NEED EACH OTHER'S PRESENCE

There is special delight and benefit in the company, presence, and mutual fellowship of the Lord's people among themselves. The presence and fellowship of the flock is a special delight to a pastor whose work among them has been blessed by the Lord. Paul's labours were blessed to the Thessalonians; his absence from them was therefore a great grief to him. For this reason also, he greatly desired their presence.

### 2—SATAN TRIES TO KEEP CHRIST'S PEOPLE APART

It is therefore no small part of Satan's work and business to mar the comfort of any such fellowship. One way of doing this is by sowing strife, division and prejudice among them while they are together (Acts 15:39). Another method is through some way or other scattering them into various places. This means they cannot enjoy the mutual fellowship they would gladly have. Paul says that he was taken from them for a short and the following verse (1 Thessalonians 2:18) shows that this was Satan's work.

The godly are separated through Satan's craftiness or malice; this may be in their affections and opinions or in their location. When he has achieved this he does everything to hinder their re-uniting and meeting together again as one. This is how great an enemy he is to the rich benefits that may be had from the communion of saints. Paul says in verse 18 they he would have come to them but Satan hindered it.

### 3—A PASTORS PRESENCE IS UNIQUE

Through the Lord's blessing, there is a unique power in a minister's presence and preaching. It is used to begin, strengthen or carry on the work of grace in hearers. This goes beyond what there is in his writings, while he is absent. Preaching has a more explicit promise of this type of blessing (Romans 10:17). Whether behaviour, gesture, or expression, there is almost nothing in the preacher that God has sent to win souls which the Lord does not use to edify one way or another (1 Corinthians 9:22). This is why Paul, not content with writing to them, desires to see their face so much. It is so that he may complete that which was lacking in their faith.

### 4—A PASTOR AND PEOPLE NEED EACH OTHER'S PRESENCE

A godly pastor delights to be among his flock so much that even necessary absence from them (due to persecution or otherwise) will be grievous to him. It was so with Paul, whose necessary departure from the Thessalonians was no less grievous than a father's separation from his destitute orphans. This is what the word "being taken from you" literally means.

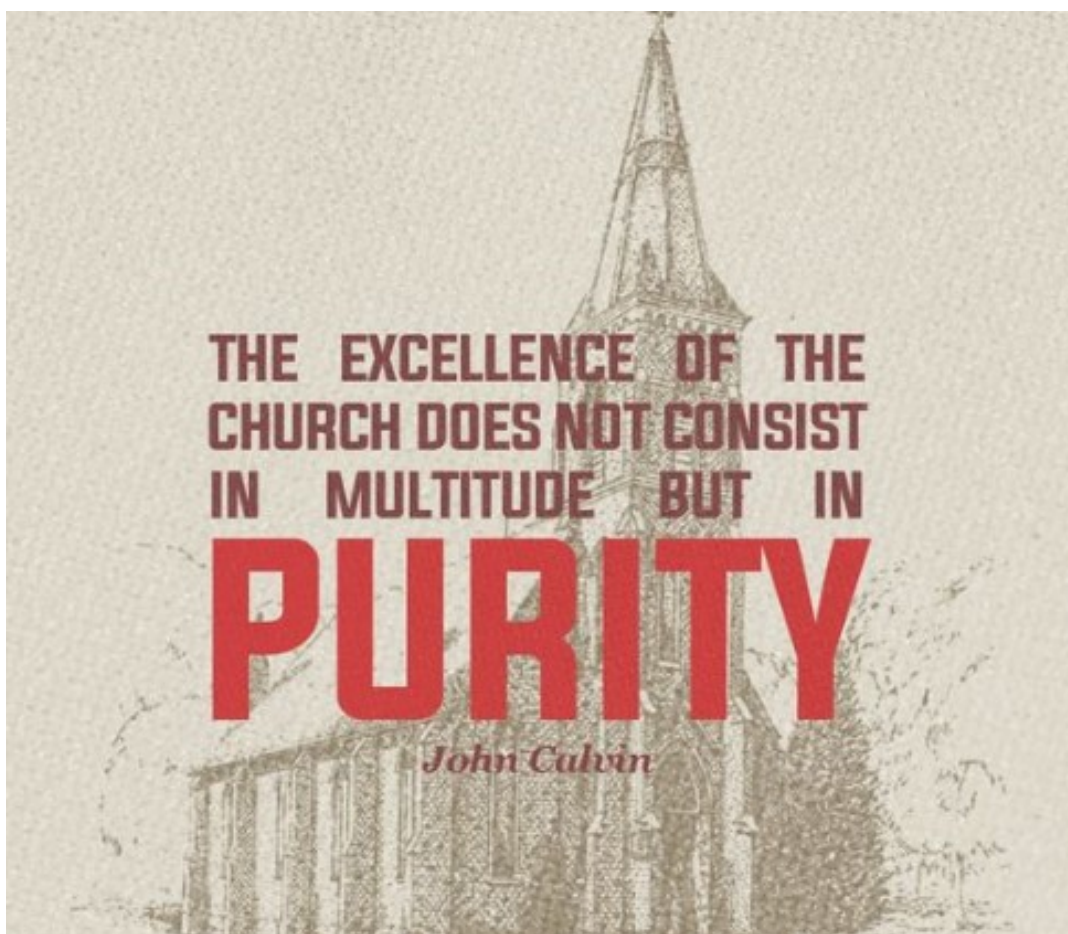
### 5—MAKE USE OF A PASTOR'S COMPANY WHILE YOU HAVE IT

The Lord's people have a duty to be wise in making good use of the company and labours of godly and faithful ministers. They may be deprived of them unexpectedly, in a moment and twinkling of an eye. Paul was taken from them for a short time (or in a short time, instantly—as it literally means).

### 6—CHRIST'S PEOPLE HAVE A BOND OF AFFECTION EVEN IN ABSENCE

Affection is no small comfort to the Lord's people in their saddest scattering. Although they cannot enjoy one another's bodily presence, they may be present with one another in heart and affection. They do this by remembering and thinking about one another's situation (2 Corinthians 7:3). They should be suitably affected by it (Hebrews 13:3). They should not only pray to God but also by all lawful means to do good to each other (Colossians 4:12). Although Paul was taken from them in presence, he was not taken from them in heart.

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Dear Children

Would you like some Bible puzzles this month? Well, here are some for you.

**Bible Orders:**

1. Who was sent out of the Garden of Eden? (Genesis chapter 3)
2. Who was told to build an ark to save his family from the flood? (Genesis chapter 6)
3. Who was told to leave his home country in Ur of the Chaldees? (Genesis chapters 11 and 12)
4. Who was told to leave Sodom before it was destroyed by fire? (Genesis chapter 19)
5. Who was told to march round Jericho for seven days? (Joshua chapter 6)
6. Who was told to bathe in the river Jordan seven times? (2 Kings chapter 5)
7. Who was asked to go to preach in Nineveh? (Jonah chapter 1)
8. Who was told to come down from the top of a sycamore tree? (Luke chapter 19)
9. Who was told: "You must be born again."? (John chapter 3)
10. Who was told to walk out of his grave? (John chapter 11)

**Husbands and Wives:**

Match them up. If you don't know who they are look up the following references:

Genesis 17; Genesis 24; Genesis 29; Exodus 6; Ruth 4; 1Samuel 1; 1Samuel 19; 1Kings 21; Acts 5; Acts 18

Ahab	Jochebed	Aquila	Peninnah
Abraham	David	Elkanah	Isaac
Michal	Priscilla	Ananias	Sarah
Amram	Leah	Ruth	Rachel
Jacob	Boaz	Sapphira	Hannah
Rebekah	Jezebel		

**Dreams and Visions:**

1. Who saw a stairway to heaven in a dream? (Genesis chapter 28)
2. Who dreamed about sheaves of corn? (Genesis chapter 37)
3. Who explained the butler's dream in prison? (Genesis chapter 40)
4. Who saw a dream about fat cows and skinny cows? (Genesis chapter 41)
5. Who was told by an angel in a dream not to visit King Herod again? (Matthew chapter 2)
6. Who was told by God in a dream to take his family to Egypt? (Matthew chapter 2)
7. Who saw a vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of God? (Acts chapter 7)
8. Who had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus? (Acts chapter 9)
9. Who saw in a dream a sheet lowered from heaven? (Acts chapter 10)
10. Who had a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help him? (Acts chapter 16)

I hope you enjoy finding the above answers by searching the Scriptures. Read each one of the stories and learn of how God works in amazing ways. Remember He is interested in the life of each one of you. Trust Him at all times and in all circumstances and ask Him to reveal Himself to you.

That is my prayer for you. With my love and God's blessing.

Granny M