

STORNOWAY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

December 2020 Newsletter



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm (Currently meeting via Zoom)

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WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

I have been reading *The Life and Letters of J.P. Struthers*, the RP minister of Whithorn (1878-1882) and Greenock (1882-1915) and editor of the *Morning Watch* children's magazine. One section recounts how Struthers had read an article that said there were 38,000 promises in the Bible. He decided to test how accurate this number was by getting the children of his Bible class to try to count them. The children kept getting different totals from each other, even after repeating the exercise! Struthers took up the exercise himself to see why there was such a diversity of answers, but he was immediately confronted with the problem – what is a promise?

We might think that it is obvious that when God says, “I will,” He is making a promise, yet, Struthers maintains there are other forms of promises:

1. A word may be a promise. If a man, for instance, calls himself a mason or a carpenter, we take it for granted that he is willing to do the work of a mason or a carpenter. So with all trades, especially with those that are called professions. For in these latter, men have no outward signs of their calling; and yet, when a man calls himself a doctor, or a lawyer, or a minister, the world, for a time at least, takes him at his word, and believes he can do things, simply because he says it.

Even so with the names of God. They all have a meaning, and that meaning has reference solely to His people's needs. When He calls Himself The Almighty, does He not proclaim Himself able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think? Does He not bind Himself to do anything and everything for us? When he calls Himself our Friend, He must show Himself friendly — He must do the kinsman's part. Every time He uses the name of Jesus He pledges Himself to save His people from their sins. And in like manner we might go through all the titles and attributes of God, and we should find them to be but promises summed up.

2. Facts are promises. Peter, in the first verse of this epistle, styles himself a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. We turn back to the Gospels, and read that, concerning that same Lord, he said, 'I know not the man.' We put the verses together, and say. Surely God forgiveth iniquity, and transgression, and sin. And the fact becomes a promise.

It is not always thus with men. If we ask them to do to us as they have done to others, or to ourselves, in time past, they tell us the circumstances are different, or, they have changed their minds. But with the Father of Lights there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. 'The Lord of us hath mindful been, And He will bless us still.'

Or, if I have not my own past to fall back upon, can I say there is any sinner He has remembered in his low estate — any one He has forgiven? Then, He will not pass by me. One proof of His love will do; He has shown Himself through the lattice. This God will be my God if I will have Him, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. If I but take Christ as mine, then all things are mine — Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all the experiences of their life, and all the facts of universal history, the world, life, death, things present, things to come — for Christ continueth ever.

3. A look may be a promise. No one would thrust himself on the notice of the dying or the sorrowing if he did not mean to help them. And may we not regard every expression, every word in the Bible, no matter what it is, as a command from God to look on Him? And may we not safely give heed, expecting to receive something? We may not see the promise, but it is because we do not know how to look for it. We receive not, because we ask not. We come to God's Word with preconceived ideas, not with the fresh eye of childlike faith. We love to go in ruts; we forget that there are green pastures. No one, for instance, can spend even a little time in the churchyards of our country and fail to be struck with the want of freshness, of individuality, in the

choice of the passages of Scripture that are engraven on the tombs. A few mourners, here and there, who have been happy in their friendships, and have comprehended the high solemnity of their task, have recorded the phrase or verse their friend loved most, or, better still perhaps, they have given him an opportunity of speaking to the world even from the grave, by writing on the stone the special lesson of his life — that view of the love of God that each year served only to make clearer. But, to pass by those who adorn their sepulchres with holy words simply because it looks pretty and sounds pious, are there not many, even of God's people, who, instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves, or falling back on some word that has been tried, are content to borrow their comfort from some adjoining monument? And if, on the other hand, one wanders amongst the graves of the native Christians of India, or some other land where religious life is earnest, one sees, in the strange texts that are employed, that the men who chose them believed, not for the saying of another, but because they had seen God themselves. And one discovers, with shame, how often in His Word the Most High has been looking towards us while our eyes were holden or turned away.

Truly, if we would but seek the Lord — if haply we might feel after Him, and find Him — we should see He is never far from every one of us. His very threatenings would prove to be the reverse sides of promises. Every word, every jot, every tittle, would seem to show us God had given us a claim on Himself. So long as Wisdom uttereth her voice in the streets, though she call us simple ones and scorners, it is to make us turn at her reproof. The great gulf is not yet fixed; we still have access to the throne of grace. Just as soldiers who are shut up in some fort know they are not forgotten so long as they see signals flashing in the distance, even though they cannot tell what the flashes mean; just as even the intermittent and unintelligible quiverings of an electric needle prove that communications are not wholly interrupted; so one word from God assures us we are not yet cast off. Earth and Heaven can still communicate.

Thirty-eight thousand promises in the Bible! As well say there are 38,000 years in Eternity.

I think there is a lot of wisdom in what Struthers writes. Perhaps it is a good exercise for you to take up yourself. Pick up your Bible and discover the promises of God.

O Lord my God, full many are the wonders Thou hast done;
Thy gracious thoughts to us-ward far above all thoughts are gone.
In order none can reckon them To thee: if them declare
And speak of them I would, they more than can be numbered are.

Every blessing,
Stephen

NEWS & EVENTS

BETH BOGUE: TWENTY YEARS SERVING THE RPCS

Beth came on the first RP Mission Team to Scotland in 1997. Beth came back on subsequent RP Missions Teams in 1998 and 1999. In the spring of 2000, Beth came over 2 months before the Mission Team and stayed on a month after the team went back to the USA. During this period Beth spoke with Andrew Quigley about coming over in a more permanent capacity. In the providence of God, she was able to obtain the necessary visa and raise the funds to pay for her salary, and so began her work in the RPCS on the 1st November 2000. Beth worked originally for Airdrie, though much of her work was Presbytery related. In 2014 she transitioned to being officially employed by Presbytery.

During the last 20 years Beth has been involved in development, production, logistics, and administration of:

- church websites and social media (11 different sites over the years) and email
- Let's Worship God booklets
- Tidings, Airdrie Word Today, weekly email (Airdrie) and Good News (RPCS) and Reformed Vision (RPCI and RPCS) newsletter/magazines
- Covenanter Theological Institute weekends
- Scottish Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary & students under care studying in Pittsburgh
- Semester in Scotland programme
- Reformation Tours
- RP Global Alliance website
- RP Mission Teams to Scotland
- GO Teams to Scotland
- archiving, collating, organising RPCS records
- managing Wishaw property
- assisting Presbytery and Airdrie treasurers with day to day accounting matters
- processing payroll for Airdrie, Wishaw, Reformation Tours, Presbytery, North Edinburgh, Stornoway, and Stranraer.
- and other misc Presbytery admin.



Beth Bogue

The Sessions and members of the Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, along with Presbytery, owe a great deal of gratitude and thanks to Beth for her diligence and energy in carrying out her work over these past twenty years. We give thanks to God who, in His providence, provided us with such an able worker to serve Him in this corner of His vineyard. Monetary gifts were presented to Beth from Airdrie and Presbytery in appreciation for all her work. THANKS BETH.

Mr Ian Shaw (Airdrie)

GLEANINGS BY BILL LUCAS

YOUR ALMIGHTY FRIEND

Because Jesus is the Almighty God, His people have an Almighty Burden-Bearer. We are a burdened people. Every believer carries a burden peculiar to himself. What is your burden, O believer? Is it indwelling sin? Is it some natural infirmity of the flesh? Is it a constitutional weakness? Is it some domestic trial? Is it a personal or relative trial? Is it the loss of property? Is it the decay of health? Is it soul anxiety? Is it mental despondency?

Come, oppressed and burdened believer, ready to give up all and sink! Behold Jesus, the Almighty God, omnipotent to transfer your burden to Himself, and give you rest! It is well that you are sensible of the pressure that you feel your weakness and insufficiency and that you are brought to the end of all your own power. Now turn to your Almighty Friend, who is the Creator of the ends of the earth, the everlasting God, who does not faint, neither is weary.

4 Oh, what strength there is in Jesus for the weak, and faint, and drooping of His flock! You are ready to succumb to your foes, and you think the battle of faith is lost. Cheer up! Jesus, your Saviour, friend, and brother, is the Almighty God, and will perfect His strength in your weakness. The battle is not yours but His! Jesus sustains our infirmities, bears our burdens, supplies our needs, and encircles us with the shield of His Almightyness! What a Divine spring of consolation and strength to the tired and afflicted saint is the Almightyness of Jesus. Your sorrow is too deep, your affliction too heavy, your difficulty too great for any human to resolve. It distances in its intensity and magnitude the sympathy and the power of man.

Come, you who are tossed with tempest and not comforted. Come, you whose spirit is wounded, whose heart is broken, whose mind is bowed down to the dust. Hide for a little while within Christ's sheltering Almightyness! Jesus is equal to your condition. His strength is almighty! His love is almighty! His grace is almighty! His sympathy is almighty! His arm is almighty! His resources are infinite, fathomless, measureless! And all this Almightyness is on your side, and will bring you through the fire and through the water. Almighty to rescue, He is also your Brother and Friend to sympathize. And while His Divine arm encircles, upholds, and keeps you, His human soul, touched with the feeling of your infirmities, yearns over you with all the deep intensity of its compassionate tenderness.

Octavius Winslow

SICKNESS AND SORROW

For all who are in sickness and sorrow, for those who face this day with anxiety, for those who are called to suffer, to undergo special trial, to pass through the Valley of the Shadow, I humbly pray that they may be sustained.

I pray for my companions in life's pilgrimage, for the feeble and the ready-to-halt, for the despondent and the oppressed, for the poor and sick and forlorn. May their valleys of weeping become filled with the springs of joy.

F B Meyer

BORDERLANDS OF ETERNITY

For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10)

An aged believer lay on his death bed. Nearing the borderlands of eternity, he turned to a comforting friend to say: "I'm saved, I have no fear of dying. But what can I say at the judgement seat of Christ about the wasted years of my life?" Let us not waste our blood-bought lives in the pursuit of self and sin. The promised day of review and reward is soon to dawn. Then will we all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.

Arnot P McIntee

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"He shall gather the lambs with his arm." (Isaiah 40:11)

Our good Shepherd has in his flock a variety of experiences, some are strong in the Lord, and others are weak in faith, but he is impartial in his care for all his sheep, and the weakest lamb is as dear to him as the most advanced of the flock. Lambs are wont to lag behind, prone to wander, and apt to grow weary, but from all the danger of these infirmities the Shepherd protects them with his arm of power. He finds new-born souls, like young lambs, ready to perish, he nourishes them till life becomes vigorous; he finds weak minds ready to faint and die, he consoles them and renews their strength. All the little ones he gathers, for it is not the will of our heavenly Father that one of them should perish.

What a quick eye he must have to see them all! What a tender heart to care for them all! What a far-reaching and potent arm, to gather them all! In his lifetime on earth he was a great gatherer of the weaker sort, and now that he dwells in heaven, his loving heart yearns towards the meek and contrite, the timid and feeble, the fearful and fainting here below. How gently did he gather me to himself, to his truth, to his blood, to his love, to his church! With what effectual grace did he compel me to come to himself! Since my first conversion, how frequently has he restored me from my wanderings, and once again folded me within the circle of his everlasting arm! The best of all is, that he does it all himself personally, not delegating the task of love, but condescending himself to rescue and preserve his most unworthy servant. How shall I love him enough or serve him worthily? I would fain make his name great unto the ends of the earth, but what can my feebleness do for him? Great Shepherd, add to thy mercies this one other, a heart to love thee more truly as I ought.

CH Spurgeon

PRAYING FOR SHEPHERD'S AS WOLVES ATTACK



As I slowly work my way through a preaching series in Revelation, last night I preached on "The Deceptive Beast of the Earth" from chapter 13 and warned the church about false teachers. Doing so reminded me of Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders. Church leaders are to guard the flock against those who would deceive. Standing against falsehood is hard work, and the church should pray for their leaders. To that end, here is a slightly edited excerpt from Hitting the Marks that gives encouragement on how you might pray for pastors and elders.

Paul called for the elders on his way to Jerusalem as he traveled near Ephesus. He had a warning for them. The church of Christ, Paul said, "was purchased with His own blood" and he foresaw a time in the near future when "fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29). Nothing like the smell of blood attracts a beast of prey such as a wolf. The flock of God, covered with the blood of Christ, is no exception. As Peter warned, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Who are these wolves? "From among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them" (v. 30). In Matthew 7:15 Jesus tells us that false teachers are those who look like sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves. They are false teachers who rise up in the church to satisfy their hunger by feeding on the sheep rather than feeding the sheep. They will be men who were in a church like yours, received seminary training, and were set apart for gospel ministry. But then they began distorting the truth, perverting it by burdening men with teachings contrary to the gospel. In so doing, they entice disciples away from the church.

As children's stories go, the deceptive wolf of "Little Red Riding Hood" is closer to the biblical picture here than the direct one of "The Three Little Pigs". These teachers will appear to be innocent enough, but their teeth of false doctrine are "all the better" for eating up the people of God. Clearly from the scriptural witness, the church in Ephesus did have a great deal of trouble with false teachers (1 Tim. 1:3-7; 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 1:13-15; 3:6-8, 14-16; Rev. 2:2-3).

6 Paul, in the face of this danger, did not "shrink back" from telling the Ephesians what they needed. He did not do so when he lived in their midst, wrote them a letter, or met with the elders. The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, faithfully presented, does not always appear to be "good food" to the sheep. When you start telling people, as Paul did, that their idols are futile (Acts 19:18-20), or they are dead in their sins without the ability to come to life without God's intervention (Eph. 2:1-9), or that they could be easily swayed by false teachings (Eph. 4:14), they might not find it appetizing. The line that the wolves feed them is more flattering and

appealing. Yet Paul was not market-driven, allowing the ways of evil men to determine his message. Rather, he was message-driven. He knew that he had to bring the gospel, with the full weight of its implications, to bear on the church at Ephesus in order to protect them.

As Paul described his ministry, we are given an example par excellence of the active ministry a pastor should have. Here are five ways you should pray that your elders and especially your minister will bring the truth of God's Word to bear on the life of your congregation in order to keep the wolves at bay. Pastors and elders should:

Be personal. In verse 20, Paul again states that he did not hold back when he says, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house." Whether in a public gathering or home visitation, Paul would tell the Ephesians anything that was profitable for them to hear. He describes his ministry as going about them "proclaiming the kingdom" (v. 25). The minister of God is to apply, sometimes quite directly and personally, the Word of God to peoples' lives.

Be committed. At this point, Paul was bound in chains—not those of a prison, but of his own spirit—to go to Jerusalem to testify for the gospel. He demonstrated this same commitment in Ephesus: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia" (v. 18). Even through tears and trials of opposition, he remained committed to bringing God's Word to God's people.

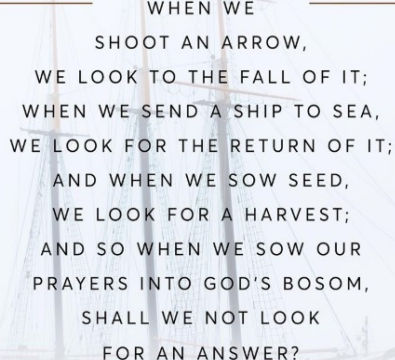
Be sacrificial. Paul said, "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (v. 24). Later, he reminded the elders of Ephesus that he had worked hard in supporting himself, rather than asking for funds from this developing church.

Be loving. Paul again testified that for the three years he was in Ephesus, he "did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears" (v. 31). Truly he abounded in love for them, wanting them to grow in the Word so much that he cried over each individual. This mutual love was evident when he departed from the elders as they wept over him. He had sown the Word in love, and he reaped love in the relationship with this church.

Be uncompromising. Paul states in verse 26, "I am innocent of the blood of all of you." He would not compromise the truth, as he told people what they needed to hear rather than what they wanted to hear.

These qualities are what differentiates true shepherds from the wolves that seek to imitate them. Pray that your church officers would be such men.

Rev. Barry York, www.gentlereformation.com



WHEN WE
SHOOT AN ARROW,
WE LOOK TO THE FALL OF IT;
WHEN WE SEND A SHIP TO SEA,
WE LOOK FOR THE RETURN OF IT;
AND WHEN WE SOW SEED,
WE LOOK FOR A HARVEST;
AND SO WHEN WE SOW OUR
PRAYERS INTO GOD'S BOSOM,
SHALL WE NOT LOOK
FOR AN ANSWER?

RICHARD SIBBES



THOSE WHO MUST BE PLACED IN THE FOREFRONT
OF THE CHURCH'S BUSINESS, MUST BE, FIRST OF
ALL, MEN WHO KNOW HOW TO PRAY. E.M. BOUNDS

©CHALLIES

SATAN, SIN AND BIBLICAL PROPORTION



It is probably fair to say that the better part of Reformed pastors do not spend enough time acknowledging the reality and activity of Satan among the people of God. On one hand, that is understandable since the Scriptures leave a fair bit of room for mystery about the evil one. Additionally, there can be a “Reformed deism” into which ministers can easily fall, when they make Christianity primarily intellectual. However, there is an opposite error into which some ministers fall. It is possible to so fixate on Satanic influence that we downplay or minimize the reality of indwelling sin, and the inclinations of the sinful heart. In our approach to the teaching about these two great enemies, Christians need to maintain biblical proportion and perspective.

I know a man who regularly preaches about Satan from passages of Scripture that have little to nothing to do with him and everything to do with personal sin. Some people talk about Satan to such a degree that they subtly—perhaps even unconsciously—deflect attention from the evil of the hearts of themselves and their hearers. How then are we to think about the relationship between Satan, sin, and sanctification in the life of a believer?

The Scriptures have much to teach us about the malicious attacks of the evil one, and the ways in which he comes to “steal, and kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). Satan leads people in rebellion against God by first undermining the authority and clarity of God’s word (Gen. 3:1). He then tempts believers to rebel against the God who has redeemed them, by deceiving them into thinking that sin will do them good (Gen. 3:5). Finally, He accuses believers when they have sinned (Rev 12:10) and seeks to leave them spiritually paralyzed. He can—under divine permission—sift believers (Luke 22:31). He can work in the Christian church through hypocritical members (Acts 5:3). The Apostle Paul charges believers recognize “the devices of Satan” (2 Cor. 2:11), and to “take up the shield of faith” so that we may “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Eph. 6:16). Peter likewise charges believers in the following way: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Far from ignoring, or downplaying the activity of Satan, the Scripture teach specific truths about it for the benefit of Christian engagement in spiritual warfare.

The New Testament highlights the victory of Christ on Satan. Jesus Himself said that he had come to “bind the strong man” (Matt. 12:29). The Apostle Paul explains in Colossians 2:15 that when Christ hung on the cross, He “disarmed principalities and powers, making a public spectacle of them—triumphing over them” by His death. The writer of Hebrews explains that Christ “through death destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Heb. 2:14–15). And the Apostle John summed up the victory of Christ over Satan when he wrote,

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The conquest of Jesus over Satan at the cross is one of the principle aspects of His redeeming work.

However, Satan is often most effective through the influence of the world (1 John 5:19) at work on the sinful minds and hearts of Christians. He works best by tempting believers to follow the sinful dictates of their hearts through the powerful allurements of “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). James tell us that “each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed” (James 1:14). This means that Christians should focus on the desires of their own hearts far more than they focus on Satan.

In the greatest theological treatment of Christianity in the New Testament (i.e., Romans), the Apostle Paul refers to sin fifty-four times and to Satan only twice (Rom. 8:34; 16:20). The book of Hebrews mentions sin thirty-nine times, and Satan once (Heb. 2:14). At the very least, that ought to give us pause and encourage us to reflect on the primacy of our own sinful hearts. The Apostle doesn’t teach us to walk around constantly trying to point out the influence of Satan. In the book of Acts to Revelation, Satan is only mentioned forty times; whereas, sin is mentioned at least nearly three hundred times.

“The New Testament highlights the victory of Christ on Satan. Jesus Himself said that He had come to “bind the strong man” (Matthew 12:29).”

Christ’s victory over sin is taught everywhere in the pages of the Scriptures. The apostolic preaching of the cross was the preaching of Christ crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sin. Paul explains in no uncertain terms that Christ was made sin for us on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). Peter tells us that “Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). The writer of Hebrews teaches that Jesus “has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26). These are just a few of the myriad of statements in the New Testament about the sin-atonement death of Jesus. While Christ’s victory over Satan at the cross is taught in the pages of Scripture, that victory is dependent on the substitutionary atonement of Christ for the sins of His people. There is a logic order to the way in which all that Jesus accomplishes at Calvary fits together.

Additionally, the New Testament focuses on the wrath-propitiating death of Jesus. In taking the sin of His people upon Himself, Jesus bore the wrath that sin deserves. As an eternal being, the Son of God endured the eternal punishment due to sin, and propitiated the wrath of God for His people. For those who are united to Christ, there is no more wrath due to them for their sin. The apostolic witness to this glorious truth is seen in such passages as Romans 5:9, 8:1; Gal. 3:13; and 1 Thess. 1:10.

If we are going to grow in holiness, we need to be clear about the relationship between Satan and sin. We err if we shift our focus on Satan to such a degree that we downplay sin in our own hearts and lives. Likewise, we run the risk of making Christianity a merely rationalistic and intellectual exercise, if we ignore the activity and machinations of Satan. The more we understand the relationship between Satan and sin—keeping them in biblical perspective and viewing them in light of the person and work of Christ—the better equipped we will be to put sin to death and to avoid the temptations that so easily ensnare us.

HOW CHRIST REFORMS HIS CHURCH

It's good to appreciate the history of the Reformation and what it recovered. But we would be mistaken in thinking this is merely a past event. The best way to appreciate what it achieved is by being committed to reformation in the present. Reformation means making the Word of God the only rule and principle in matters of religion. Wherever this is not faithfully applied in principle and practice, the Church needs reforming. At the Reformation, John Calvin explained that there were two great areas in which the Church needed reforming. Firstly, "the mode in which God is duly worshipped; and, secondly...the source from which salvation is to be obtained". He emphasised the importance of worship because it is the goal of salvation. This is also one of Christ's key priorities in reforming His Church. It includes the spirit in which we offer that worship as well as what we offer.

The Reformations under Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat and Josiah were marked by a return to biblical worship and a zeal against idolatry. These biblical histories also show us the challenges of such a work. Calvin was well aware of the difficulty of involved in this work of reformation. "I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word". Yet it is ultimately a work that Christ undertakes for His own glory in using those who serve Him in this. Christ must be as a refiner's fire to purge the Church's dross (Malachi 3:2). He purges His people, His public worship and ministers so that their worship may be pure and acceptable, all things being restored to their integrity (Malachi 3:3-4). In this updated extract, George Hutcheson helps us to understand how this prophecy of Christ applies today, even to the purest of churches. Reading it should bring us to pray that Christ will do this work, however hard it may be.

1. CHRIST'S REFORMING IS VERY TIRING

Christ's coming to His Church in the ministry of His gospel and to carry on a reformation, makes such a time prove very winnowing. "Who may abide? who shall stand?" (Malachi 3:2). It is a trying time and therefore it is hard to endure, so that it is a wonder to see any get through it. It is no wonder when we consider the many hypocrites in his Church, and the great hypocrisy and dross of His saints which He cannot endure.

Great vicissitudes and shakings often accompany a time of reformation; many errors and delusions usually prevail then. The ministry of the gospel is effective in exposing sin but if people do not amend their ways, they become worse. The respectable become godless, the formalists become careless, and the ungodly become rebellious. How speedily may a people under the gospel fill up the measure of their sin and become ripe for many judgments. It is for these reasons that Christ's coming is declared to be such a terrifying day; "Who may abide? who shall stand?"

2. CHRIST'S REFORMING REMOVES THE CHURCH'S DROSS

There is not only much unsoundness in Christ's Church but it is also difficult to discern until Christ exposes it. It is then seen to cleave so closely that it is difficult to remove. No less than "a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap", can either reveal or remove this dross in the metal and filth in the cloth. Only Christ's fan can reveal the chaff and take it away. Christ has sufficient power to purge His Church and reach the dross. He is so zealous that He will not spare at all. He will either consume everything together or separate the dross. For "He is as a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap".

3. CHRIST'S REFORMING IS NEEDED BY THE PUREST CHURCH

The purest Church of Christ is so ready to contract pollution within time, that purging is necessary. God's chose people who are not to be destroyed need purging because they have much dross. However hot the furnace may be it is their comfort and purging that He intends. He is a refiner to His Church and He will purify it.

4. CHRIST'S REFORMING IS FOR THE CHURCH'S GOOD

Christ's purging His Church, by His Word, Spirit and rod, speaks of His love and a purpose of much good. He sits at it as a task on which His heart is set. He "purifies as gold and silver"; precious metals refined for honourable use. Thus, the godly must submit to His way of purging in its duration, even though He sits at it as a work that is not

soon finished. They must submit to the degree of purging as silver and gold in the fire, knowing that He sits at the furnace. He will make it apparent that His refining is not with silver in relation to the heat and extremity of the trial (Isaiah 48:10).

5. CHRIST'S REFORMING PURIFIES THE CHURCH'S WORSHIP

Pure ordinances and “an offering in righteousness” (according to the rule of Jesus Christ and through His righteousness) are a special mercy for Christ’s Church. The mercy is completed when it is joined with personal reformation; when there are purified Levites and “an offering in righteousness”. It is personal renewal and reconciliation that enables people to engage in pure service; right service must begin there. “He shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer an offering in righteousness”.

We are not to please ourselves as to what we do in service to God unless He has declared He will accept it. Thus, the only way of acceptable worship is through Christ. When He takes any in His hand and brings them out of their polluted condition, He makes them and their service (in itself abominable) well-pleasing through Him. When He comes and purifies His people, “then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord”.


6. CHRIST'S REFORMING PURIFIES THE CHURCH'S MINISTERS

Christ’s coming under the gospel does not tend towards the destruction of a ministry, though indeed they often need to be purged. “He shall purify the sons of Levi”. A holy ministry is a special blessing to the Church for keeping ordinances pure and promoting purity among people, especially a pure and acceptable way of worship. When the sons of Levi are purified, they offer in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem are pleasant to the Lord’.

7. CHRIST'S REFORMING RESTORES THE CHURCH


Christ is the restorer of all things by His coming in the flesh and by His death and gospel. He is the substance of all that is excellent to those that close in with Him by faith. To be “pleasant as in the days of old, and as in former years”, means not only that their service will be acceptable as of old when most godly men offered. It also implies that all the remarkable evidences of favour manifested toward them and wondered at in their fathers’ days as the free reward of their service, will really be given to the godly in and by Christ.

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God showers his
extraordinary gifts through
ordinary means of grace,
loves us through
ordinary fellow image bearers,
and sends us out into the world
to love and serve others
in ordinary callings.

MICHAEL HORTON



NOTHING BUILT FOR THE GLORY OF
man will survive God's scrutiny.
BUT WHAT IS DONE FOR HIS GLORY
will endure forever.

R.C. SPROUL

Children's Corner



Dear Children

It is so hard to believe that we have now reached the last month of the year. How time flies! I'm sure that last January on New Year's Day you were thinking that December was a long way off but now it has arrived.

Each day, week, month and year has a beginning and an ending. We too have had a beginning and our life in this world will also have an ending. God, however, has no beginning or ending. He is eternal. That is very difficult to understand but, because God's Word makes this clear to us, we have to believe it. When Moses was being sent by God to demand of Pharaoh that he let the Children of Israel leave Egypt he asked God who he would say had sent him. God said to him: Tell them that '**I am**' sent you. By calling Himself '**I am**' God was saying that He had no beginning and would not have an end. He is always in the present. We can never say '**I am**' when talking about the past or the future. It has to be '**I was**' or '**I will be**'. Only God can say '**I am**' when He is referring to Himself in the past or in the future.

To say that our life in this world will end one day does not mean that we go out of existence. When God created Adam we are told that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and that man became a living soul. Our soul, because it has come from God, will, therefore, live as long as God lives and that is forever. The Bible tells us that our soul will live forever in one of two places. It will live in either heaven or hell. Does that mean that our body goes out of existence? No. The Bible also tells us that, although our body will return to dust in the earth, at the last day which is the Day of Judgment, our body will be raised and will be re-united to our soul. Does that sound unbelievable? No, because if, in the beginning, God created man out of dust is He not able to raise that body again when it has returned to dust? Yes, God is able to do that to the millions of people who have died ever since Adam was created. God is all powerful.

What does all this mean for each one of us? As we come to the end of another year so one day we will all come to the last day of our life in this world. Stop and think, when you die where will your soul go on that day? The Bible says that the soul will return to God who gave it. On that day God will judge whether our soul will go to heaven or to hell. Now, you all know that only those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ will go to heaven. Those who do not will be sent to hell. Those of you who have been on holiday abroad know that you need a passport to get to another country. To get to heaven you need a passport too. The passport you need is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you have Him as your Saviour? Are you one of those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour and have received forgiveness of sins? If you are, then you are blessed indeed and you will spend eternity with your Lord and Saviour. You will be ready to meet Him when He comes for you at your death. If you haven't yet trusted in Him, then it is still not too late. He is still calling sinners to come unto Him.

My dear Children, I pray that you will think on these things. You are not too young. The Lord Jesus wants boys and girls to come to Him early in their life. Read Proverbs chapter 8 and verse 17 where these words are written: "I love them that love Me and those who seek me early shall find Me." In the New King James instead of **early** it has **diligently**. I am told that the word in the original language of Hebrew can mean both. I pray that you will seek the Lord early in your life and that you will also seek Him diligently. Then you will find Him true to His promise: "**shall find Me**".

I send you my love and prayers at the end of another year. May God bless you all.