



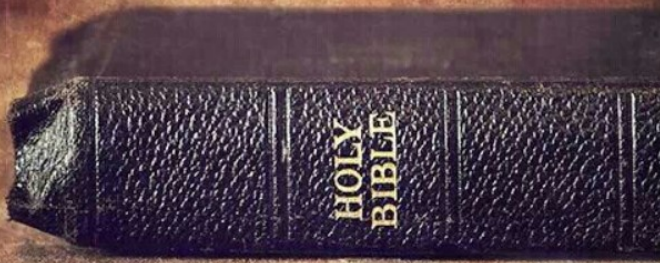
STORNOWAY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

June 2022 Newsletter

For I am not ashamed of the
Gospel of Christ, for it is the
power of God to salvation for
everyone who believes...

Romans 1:16



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Word from the Manse.....2
- Where Is the Power of God?.....3
- Children's Corner.....4

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WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

Earlier this year, as your new interim moderator, I referred to my previous time with you in the same capacity and wrote as follows: 'Early in 2016, I wrote these words in your congregational newsletter: 'I'm writing this as your new Interim-Moderator hoping, for all the right reasons, that my tenure might be short-lived!' And now, with 2022 beginning (DV), I am back in the same capacity – and with the same hope!'

Well, suffice to say that the hope of a short vacancy was, again, graciously realized and, so, it gives me great pleasure to write this piece from the manse as your new minister.

I would have liked to have said more in this month's newsletter – even by way of outlining my intentions regarding my own contributions to this magazine – but the moving process has been more arduous than expected and that will have to wait till next month.

Returning to minister the Word in Stornoway, 21 years after leaving, was bound to lead to much reflection: For one thing, I am conscious that an older generation, many of them advanced in godliness, have passed away – and how greatly they are missed! For another, while it is still hugely refreshing to see how the Lord's Day is observed in Stornoway in comparison with how it is (not?) observed in Glasgow, there are still clear signs of encroachment upon it. And, on a related note, it seems evident that there is nothing like the same amount of footfall, or car traffic, on the way to the various churches of the town every Lord's Day.

And, on this latter point, while there are many obvious factors contributing to it, it must be wondered if the church itself doing so by its uncritical and unrestrained use of technology.

Of course, no-one wishes to restrict the circulation of the Word – but, still, it needs to be said that the unrestricted live transmission of all worship services, without careful and repeated warnings to those who log-on not to do so in preference to attendance upon the house of God, is bound to lead to a falling off in attendance on public worship. And all the evidence shows that this has, in fact, happened – to the extent that some churches are considering moving towards almost exclusive online services.

This involves a serious misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of public worship and the proper use of God's appointed channels of grace. How, for example, does it square with the call upon us to make sure that we are 'not forsaking the assembling of (our)selves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another' – and this with a view to 'stir up' one another (Hebrews 10:24)? Let it be emphasized that the only legitimate reason for our absence from the means of grace is an inability to attend through illness, infirmity, or through the need for some work of necessity or mercy.

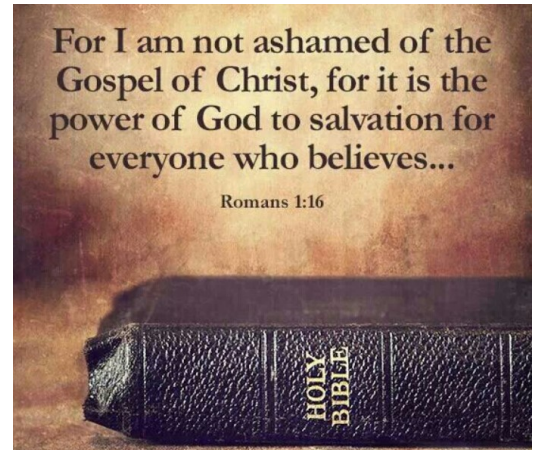
Having heard this complaint of declining attendance for this reason from several, I am hugely thankful that it does not, as yet anyway, apply to ourselves: all those among us who use sermon audio are those who attended worship when they could and would dearly love to do so still. And as I preached recently in connection with Abraham 'offering up' Isaac, when the heart is willing, but the body weak, the Lord in his great grace considers the deed done. Therefore, there is a very real sense in which they are not missing from our midst!

- 2 As we considered a few Sabbaths ago, may the Lord who moves among the lampstands (congregations) every single Sabbath day always find us present there whenever we can.

Your Minister

WHERE IS THE POWER OF GOD?

he last sermon Martin Luther preached was in the second week of February 1546 in his hometown of Eisleben. Two days later, he would become ill and soon after perish. In this last sermon, Luther preached with passion about his concern for Germany. He observed that after the gospel had been rediscovered—after light had dawned and pushed aside the darkness that had eclipsed it during the Middle Ages—people were now becoming somewhat jaded to the gospel. They could hear it from virtually every pulpit in Germany, but it was no longer something that ignited fire in their bones. Instead, peasants were journeying to see relics throughout various villages in Germany, which signified a return to the system of medieval Roman Catholicism.



The peasants were going to these villages because in one town, they boasted the possession of the trousers of Joseph, and another one had a vial of milk from the breast of the Virgin Mary. And so, people flocked to these places just to get a glimpse of the pants of St. Joseph and the milk of Mary the Mother of Jesus. Luther was very upset about this. He wondered, “Why in the world would peasants anywhere make an arduous journey just to see a piece of cloth that was worn by Joseph?” The answer was very simple: they were looking for power. They believed that the relics of the saints contained power—power to heal, power to forgive, and power to transform their lives.

In his dying sermon, Luther pled with the people not to be fooled by impotent articles that weren't the real thing. He implored them not to seek after these things as if they were an improvement to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The problem that Luther had identified is that the people were departing from the power of God.

When Paul introduces himself at the beginning of his epistle to the Romans, he says that he is “set apart for the gospel of God” (1:1). That's the first mention of the gospel in his epistle, an epistle that is itself an exposition of the gospel. Notice whose gospel it is: he is set apart to the gospel of God. Paul is saying that the gospel is God's possession. He owns it. He is its author.

This gospel is the very gospel of the kingdom crystallized into a message about its King. The gospel is objectively about the person and work of Jesus. That's God's gospel. And anyone preaching any other gospel is not preaching God's gospel. My personal testimony may be meaningful to somebody, but it's not the gospel. The content of the gospel is Jesus.

Paul continues speaking about his indebtedness for having been set apart to preach this gospel. He's a debtor to the Jew and to the Greek, to the wise and to the unwise, to the cultured and to the barbarian, to every place that he goes (Rom. 1:14–15). He has a debt to pay. He has an obligation to fulfill to preach that gospel.

But what he says next is what we most need to understand: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel. ”Why? “For it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

That's what Luther was trying to say in his last sermon. Where's the power? It's in the Word, and we're looking for it everywhere else. I doubt if any of us have relic collections, but some churches seek power in adding a coffee shop to their church or pursuing the latest trendy church-growth method. These things don't have power. There is a formula for a prosperous and successful ministry, and that formula is in preaching the Word of God in season and out of season.

Children's Corner



Dear Children

Have you ever wondered why some days are calm with hardly any wind and other days are windy? Sometimes these winds get very strong and can reach gale force or even hurricane force. It all has to do with science and science was not one of my favourite subjects in school. Quite simply, it has to do with warm air and cold air meeting together. Those of you who like science will understand more about it than I do.

In the Gospels we read of a storm on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus in the boat. Read the accounts for yourselves in Matthew chapter 8, Mark chapter 4 and Luke chapter 8. Those who know that area tell us that the wind can become very strong all of a sudden and with no warning. When the disciples set off in the boat with Jesus there was no sign of bad weather. If there had been they would not have set off. They were fishermen and would have known how unwise that would have been. But do you think that Jesus knew that a storm was coming? Now, you all know that Jesus is God, that He knows all things as well as being all powerful. Do you think He allowed them to set off in order to test their faith in Him?

Jesus was obviously very tired after a long day of preaching and teaching so He lay down to rest and fell asleep on a cushion in the stern. When the storm suddenly got up the disciples were alarmed that Jesus didn't wake up and show concern for them. They were very frightened and kept shouting: "Master, Master, we are perishing. Save us!" Did they really think that Jesus didn't care that they were in danger of drowning? How could they think that? They had witnessed many of the miracles that He had done, how He had healed people of various diseases. He had even raised someone from the dead. Also, He had taught them many wonderful things. It should have been obvious to them that this person was totally different to everyone else. I'm sure they knew all that otherwise why were they asking Him to save them from drowning but, as Jesus Himself said to them, they had 'little faith'.

What do **you** think of the Lord Jesus? Do **you** believe that He is the omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (always present) God? You will probably say that you do but when you meet with difficult situations do you really believe that He can help you and answer your prayers? Do you go to God first and tell Him your problems, asking Him for His help and guidance? He wants you to bring all your concerns to Him for He is the One who knows how to help you and as the Apostle Peter says in 1 Peter, chapter 5 and verse 7: "Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." Isn't it wonderful to know that the Almighty God cares for us!

The first verse of a religious song goes like this:

What a friend we have in Jesus

All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry

Everything to God in prayer!

I pray that you will make it a daily practice to bring all that concerns you or worries you before God in prayer. Although God is the Almighty Creator who is in heaven, He is interested in the smallest things in our lives here in this world. He is even interested in the sparrows! (Matthew 10:29) What is so wonderful about that is that you can come to Him in prayer at any time of the day or night. Thank Him for all He does for you and for being your best friend, looking after you every moment. Read what David wrote in Psalm 121. What a wonderful promise!

4 May the Lord bless each one of you, watch over you and keep you, and help you to trust in Him more and more as you grow up. There is no one in this world like Him.

With my love and prayers.

Granny M