



STORNOWAY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

October 2022 Newsletter



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
- News & Events.....2
- The Secret to a Happy Life.....4
- Weeping for the Prodigal.....6
- Children's Corner.....8

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WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

Over the last few days, and after a lifetime of hearing ‘God save the Queen!’ I am just beginning to get used to hearing ‘God save the King!’ And with these words, as is the case with so many things said and done in connection with the Queen’s death and the King’s accession, I have been brought back both to our religious and spiritual heritage as well as to the Bible itself.

At the formal proclamation of his accession, it was good to hear the King state, before watching millions, his prayerful dependence upon the guidance and help of almighty God as he begins his reign. And we heartily join in praying that he will indeed know God’s guidance and his help in following it. As to his oaths – the very existence of which puts God at the heart of proceedings – I’m quite sure that an increasingly secular nation, ignorant (often willfully) of our religious heritage and constitutional foundations, must have listened with astonishment as the new King proceeded to avow, with the Word of God in his hand, that he would maintain and preserve, ‘inviolable’, ‘the settlement of the true Protestant religion’ as established by law and, specifically, the ‘government, worship, discipline, rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland’. It would be a blessing indeed if hearing such words would send people back to their history books – before they are revised and rewritten – to discover what all that involved then and what it still entails now, and to discover, particularly, the role played by our covenanting forefathers in establishing the constitutional monarchy, itself under biblical law, which has contributed so much to the peace and prosperity of our nation for so many years.

But ‘God save the King!’ takes us back to the Bible itself – where the expression first appears – and to the proclamations of Saul, Solomon, and Joash as Kings and in the address of Nehemiah to Artaxerxes, and in that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar and, later, to Belshazzar, Kings of Babylon. That list is not exhaustive.

However, the most important use of the phrase is one that is, sadly, easily missed. It is the most important because it is addressed, by the church, to none other than to Christ the King! And it is easily missed because of the way the phrase is rendered in some translations (including our own and the KJV). Psalm 20 closes with these words (and I leave them without punctuation to make the ambiguity plain) ‘Lord save the King hear us when we call’. Every translation breaks these words up – but they do so differently: In our version, it is broken up like this, ‘Lord save! May the King hear us when we call!’ However, since the theme of the whole psalm has to do with the importance of the King emerging from his battle in triumph, surely it is better to follow the alternative understanding, followed by most translations, which break up the word as follows, ‘Lord save the King! Hear us when we call!’ With this understanding, the prayer is not addressed to the King Himself but to the God who will preserve and deliver the King.

Of course, the Lord *did* answer the prayer of the church and he did save the King – even from death. And when the King himself prayed and ‘asked life’ of God the Father, he was given, in response to his request, ‘such a length of days that he forevermore should live.’ What an answer to prayer that was! Which reminds us of the most important truth of all. We can all say, and mean, ‘Long live the King’ just as we all said, and meant, ‘Long live the Queen’ – but, unless the Lord returns first, King Charles, like Queen Elizabeth, will surely die. But when the church prayed, in Psalm 20, ‘Long live the King’, the answer to that prayer is found at the right hand of God, where there sits a King who reigns *forever and ever* – reigning ‘in the power of an endless life’.

Your minister

NEWS & EVENTS

THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE TOUR—FIGHTING FOR THE FAMILY

Tuesday 4 October

7.30pm—9.00pm

Cabarfeidh Hotel



When the Lord's people were surrounded by their enemies, Nehemiah encouraged them not to be afraid, to remember the greatness of the LORD and to fight for their families (Neh 4:14). In our day too, when Christian families are facing hostile, secular ideologies, the need to fight for the family has never been greater. Join us for this special meeting to find out more.

'Conversion therapy'

LGBT activists are calling for a broad ban on so-called 'conversion therapy' that would apply to preaching, prayer, pastoral conversations and parenting. This poses a serious threat to Christian families and churches. The Scottish Government has promised to bring in as comprehensive a law as possible and there will be a public consultation in the autumn.

Assisted suicide

Liam McArthur MSP will bring forward a Member's Bill to the Scottish Parliament early next year to make it legal for terminally ill people to receive help to kill themselves. Previous attempts to introduce such a law in Scotland have failed, thanks to many Christians and others contacting their MSPs. But a new generation of MSPs needs to be convinced of the dangers of such a law.

Education

Historically, the State has kept out of Scottish education. However, last year the Scottish Government introduced guidance for dealing with transgenderism in schools. It funds the controversial LGBT activist group TIE campaign, which has created an online platform of teaching resources. There are real concerns that Scotland's children are being indoctrinated with radical gender ideology.

NEW JAPANESE PSALTER

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Japan has produced a new Psalm book. They stated, "Tunes are mostly taken from various RP psalters, freely since syllables of Japanese language is 150% longer than English, and needed to be adjusted much. We did not compose new Japanese tunes, since our small RP hasn't had any talent of composers, and it has been good to use the same tune both in Japanese and English for RP's bilingual singing. But Ps.23 in the Chinese tune, which RP missionaries brought from China mission at the beginning of Japanese mission, is included in this psalter."



REFORMATION GAMBIA

Reformation Gambia is a ministry run by Pastor Sylvester Konteh (Reformed Presbyterian Church) and Pastor Edrissa Colley (Presbyterian Church in the Gambia). The purpose of Reformation Gambia is to promote and encourage Biblical reformation in Gambian churches. **The Pastors Fellowship**, run by Reformation Gambia, meets on a monthly basis.



“God resists the proud but gives
grace to the humble.”

James 4:6

James is sometimes called the “New Testament book of Proverbs.” That’s because of passages such as James 4 that give us a series of loosely linked aphorisms of practical, godly wisdom. This chapter begins with our universal concern about conflict:

“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend on your passions” (James 4:1–3)

The world is marked by warfare. There’s global war and national conflict; there’s warfare in the church; there’s warfare in the community; there’s warfare in the home—there’s conflict all around us. James says that these quarrels, fights, disputes, and contentions come from within, from the fallenness of our hearts. The motivation for these conflicts is envy, or covetousness, which is a transgression we rarely hear about in our own day.

Conflict is the fruit of covetous hearts that want what others have. Now, it’s not inherently wrong to want something we don’t have. James’ statement that we do not have because we do not ask implicitly calls us to ask God to give us our desires. We should feel no shame when we desire good things as long as our desire does not make those good things into idols. The warning against covetousness comes into play when James acknowledges that sometimes we ask *wrongly* for what we don’t have. Sometimes we ask for good things in the wrong spirit.

What does this mean? Consider that we ask for things because we believe they will make us happy. This turns into covetousness when we believe that we have an inalienable right to pursue pleasure as the source of happiness. Maximizing pleasure is our culture’s chief goal, but happiness and pleasure are profoundly different.

I’m not opposed to pleasure. I enjoy pleasure. But remember, sin is tempting because it can be pleasurable—in the short term. We sin because we think it will feel good. Every time we sin, we believe the original lie of Satan, who tempts us that we will be happy if we get the pleasure we want. Hedonism, which defines the good in terms of the pleasurable, is the oldest philosophy to oppose God.

However, sin never brings happiness—the state of inner delight, blessedness, and contentment wherein there is no room for greed or covetousness. Christians know moments of happiness, when we are alone in the presence of God, in fellowship with Him, and it is enough to know our sins have been forgiven. But soon we forget and we’re worrying about the bills. Suddenly, we say, “If I just had a little bit more money, if I just had a better car, if I just had a nicer house, I’d finally be happy.”

After explaining conflict’s source, James reveals what ends it and brings true happiness:

“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves therefore to God...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:6–7, 10)

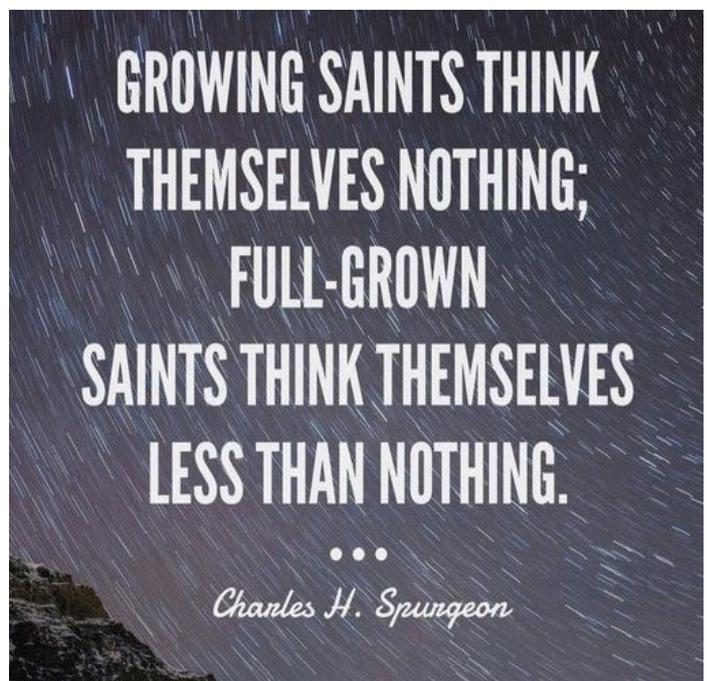
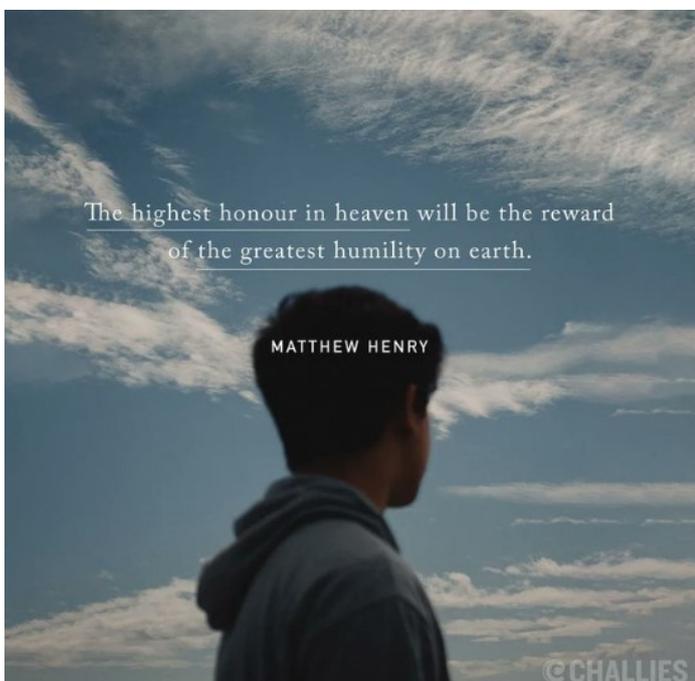
Humility is the secret to a happy life. What is humility? Scripture does not say the humble person is Mr. Milquetoast, the wishy-washy person, the spineless man who is a doormat for the world; rather, the humble person is one who fears God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and such fear flows from a heart that is in awe of God and bows to His authority.

The opposite of humility is arrogance. To think God owes us every pleasure we want manifests an unspeakable arrogance that presumes to critique God’s provision for us. Every time we start fighting over what we don’t have, our struggle is ultimately with the Lord. Is anything more foolish than warring with God? Opposition from God is opposition with a capital O. He’s the last being I want to have opposing me. God opposes the proud, so we need to get this maxim from James into our souls: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

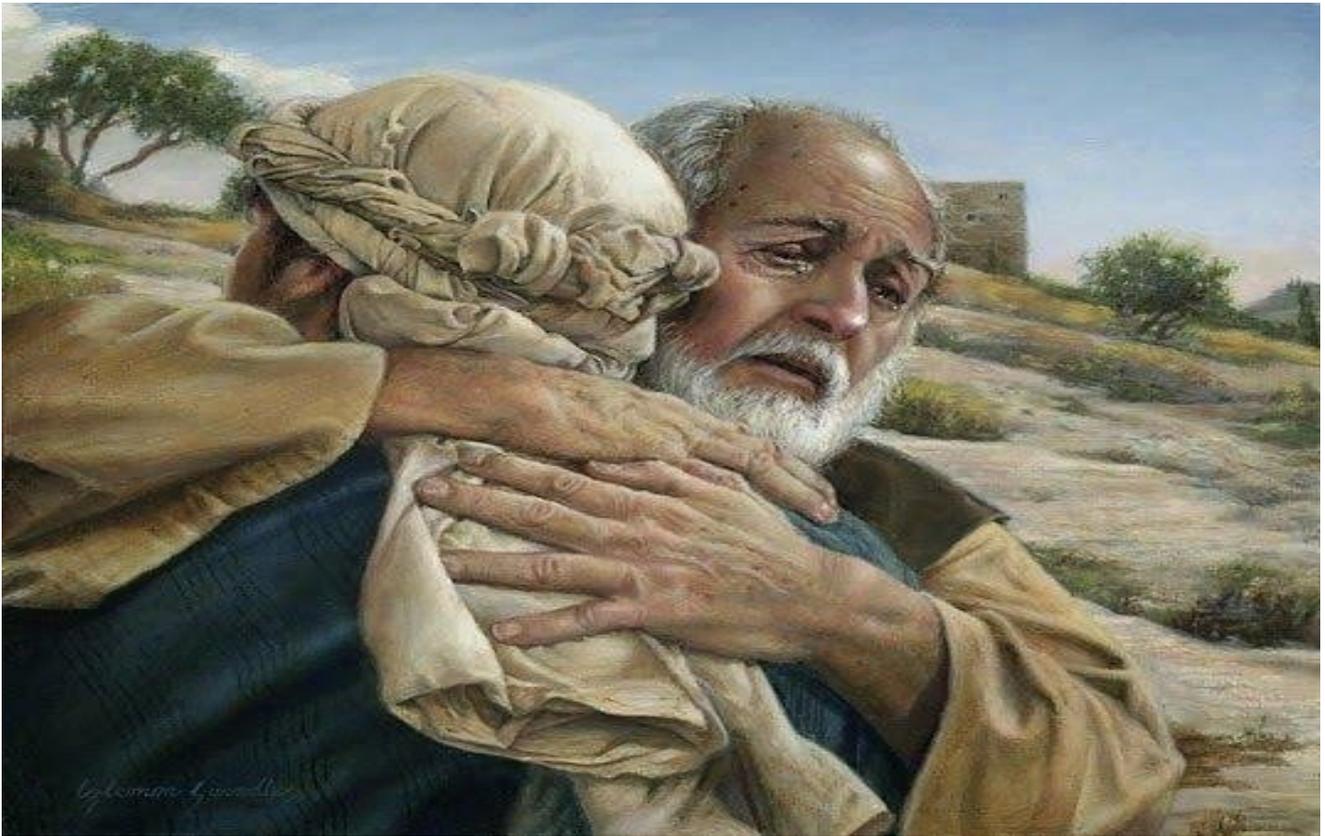
If there’s anything that we ought to be in a passionate quest to achieve, it’s the grace of God. By definition, grace is not something you can earn. You can receive grace only if God in His mercy gives it to you. It’s a gift. You can’t buy, earn, or merit it. God gives grace to the humble because they understand the graciousness of grace. Humility willingly submits one’s life to God’s sovereign mercy. Humble people recognize that the Lord doesn’t owe them anything.

Do we want more grace? Let’s try a little more humility. Do we seek less opposition from God? Let’s do away with our pride. We must remember that we are unworthy servants throwing ourselves on the mercy of the court. When we enter God’s presence and demand that He give us something or try to persuade Him to give us something as if we were His counsellors who advise Him of a better way of doing things, we’ve entered into His presence not boldly as the Bible calls us to do, but arrogantly. We must come to Him in thanksgiving and praise for the grace we’ve already received. The more humble we are, the more grace we get. The prouder we are, the more God opposes us.

R.C Sproul, Tabletalk Magazine



WEEPING FOR THE PRODIGAL



How do Christian parents pray for straying covenant children? For those who know the faith but have long abandoned it?

The Apostle Paul gives us a model in the opening words of Romans 9:

“I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Here Paul considers his kinsmen according to the flesh, meaning the Jewish people. As he looks upon the nation

- whom God greatly favored above all others as recorded in the Old Testament;
- those who were known as the “children of God;”
- the people to whom God through the centuries sent His signs and prophets;
- those from whom the Messiah came and to whom the Messiah was sent;
- and sees that though their Messiah came to them as Jesus Christ, in large measure they rejected and spumed the Holy One of Israel;

What is his response? Paul expresses that he has a "mega sorrow" (what the Greek says) and an anguish in his heart that will not stop. By way of contrast, the Apostle John said that he had no greater joy than to hear of his children walking in the truth (3 John 4). Certainly then there is no greater, unrelenting sorrow for a parent than a child walking the other way.

And it is most fitting that Romans 9 begins with this expression of grief. For Romans 9 is perhaps one of the most difficult chapters in the Bible for people to receive, as it expounds upon the doctrine of predestination. This chapter of the Bible tells us that not only has God elected some to salvation, but deliberately passed over others. Thus, this expression of Paul here instructs in this manner: the only type of heart that can properly handle doctrines such as predestination is a broken one. A heart that, even when faced with seeing once-professing people exhibit reprobate behaviour, still cries out for God to redeem.

In so doing, Paul emulates Jeremiah who wept this way over the children of Israel.

“For these things I weep; my eyes run down with water; because far from me is a comforter, one who restores my soul. My children are desolate because the enemy has prevailed” (Jer. 1:16).

“My eyes run down with streams of water because of the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eyes pour down unceasingly, without stopping, until the LORD looks down and sees from heaven. My eyes bring pain to my soul because of all the daughters of my city” (Jer. 3:48-51).

Like Christ weeping over Jerusalem as He foresaw her destruction, Paul said he was speaking the truth, he was not lying, and his conscience bore a Spirit-confirmed witness regarding his unceasing grieving for the lost children of Israel. Certainly the Christian parent is right in doing likewise.

A while ago I read of a Christian relief worker in Sudan. She witnessed thousands of refugees fleeing persecution, with many mothers having to watch their babies die in their arms because the food and medicine were not available to treat them. The relief worker's response in the face of this tragedy was two-fold. First, she spoke Biblical truth to herself. She did not know why the Lord was letting these children perish, but brought to mind truths such as "the secret things belong to God, but things revealed belong to us" and that the Lord takes no pleasure in death. Second, she hugged and cried with the mothers, saying that in her helplessness, when she could do nothing else, she knew it was right to weep.

Paul goes on to make the astounding statement, “I could wish that myself were accursed, separated from God.” The word "wish" here is another word for prayer. These words are similar to the prayer that Moses uttered. When God said he was going to blot out the people of Israel, Moses in turn pled for their forgiveness saying, “Please blot me out of your book that you have written” (Ex. 32:32).

We know that this cannot truly happen, that a Christian parent could give their soul for their child or that one person could be cursed for those apart from God. These prayers are hyperbole of speech. But that does not mean that the true feeling of heart they express is not there. And that heart sorrow is to drive the ones praying for lost children back to where they need to go, to their only hope. To the gospel, where they remember that Christ was separated and cursed by God so that His people could be brought back to Him. Surely each anguished tear of the grieving Christian parent, preserved in His bottle and recorded in His book by the Lord (Ps. 56:8), is a cry to that end.

And they are a testimony to the church that what should bring us all to tears is not only that multitudes in dark nations are perishing apart from the gospel, but that so many are dying in its presence.

Rev Barry York, www.gentlereformation.com



‘BE MUCH IN SECRET PRAYER. CONVERSE LESS WITH MAN, AND MORE WITH GOD.’

-GEORGE WHITEFIELD



‘There is no greater darkness than ignorance of God.’

—John Calvin



Children's Corner



Dear Children

Thursday the 8th of September 2022 will, no doubt, be a day many of you will never forget. It is the day that we heard of the death of our beloved Queen Elizabeth II. She is the only Queen you will have ever known and possibly also will be the only Queen you will ever know.

I have never met her personally although I have seen her at very close quarters. I was also once at dinner in Holyrood Palace and at a Garden Party there too. Whenever anyone met the Queen it was required that men should bow to her and that ladies should curtsy. This was to show that they were acknowledging her authority as their Sovereign. Whilst accepting this allegiance from her subjects she made it clear that she too was under authority and bowed to a higher King to whom she was accountable. She has, therefore, set us all an example to follow.

The Bible tells us in Psalm 95 and verse 6: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." If we are to show respect and honour to Kings and Queens in this world then how much more should we do so to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is not only the One who gave us life but who also sustains that life each day. Do you think of that every morning you wake up, that it is God who has kept you alive during the night and do you come to Him in prayer to thank Him? What about at the end of the day? Do you thank Him for how He has kept you and preserved you from danger and watched over you during the day? What about thanking Him for all that He provides for you – food, health, and so many other things? Above all, He deserves our thanks for providing us with a Saviour to save us from our sins and to give us a new heart, a new life and the prospect of an eternity of bliss.

Does the death of Queen Elizabeth make you think of what happens when we die? She may have lived a very long life but not everyone lives that long. Death can come so suddenly and unexpected. It was like that in the case of little Olivia Pratt-Korbel, the nine year old girl who was recently shot accidentally in her own home. Age does not preserve us from death. Death ends our life in this world but it is not the end for us. Our souls are immortal, that is they will never die. The Bible also tells us that our bodies too will rise again and join our souls to be forever in an eternity of bliss with the Lord Jesus or else in a lost eternity which we are told in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 41 "was prepared for the devil and his angels." How important it is for us to be prepared for the day of our death whenever it comes, whether it comes when we are still young or when we are old! Faith and trust in the Lord Jesus as our personal Saviour is what will leave us prepared for that moment. I pray that each one of you will trust in Him for "none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned." (Psalm 34, verse 22)

As we now turn our allegiance to King Charles III, let us pray for him that he too will recognise that he is accountable to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to whom we shall all give our account at the last. I pray that you will never lose sight of this solemn truth and that you will all live your lives in a way that will be pleasing to God and grant you an entrance into heaven at your death. How can we please God? The writer to the Hebrews in chapter 11 and verse 6 tells us that "without **faith** it is impossible to please God." Faith must come first followed by the works of faith. My prayer is that this will be true of each one of you.

8 With my love and God's blessing.

Granny M