



STORNOWAY
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

June 2023 Newsletter



WELCOME

LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation

Most of you will know that I was at a wedding very recently. The church building was exceptionally warm and, later, I overheard someone say that he wished someone would have turned down the *thermometer*. The person he was speaking to – if he spotted the mistake – was gracious enough not to correct him because what the person meant to say, or should have said, is that he wished someone would have turned down the *thermostat*. It's a common mistake. But thermostats and thermometers are not the same things: A thermostat *regulates* the temperature while a thermometer *measures* it.

A thermostat *changes* the temperature so that, for example, if you walk into a room that's 16 degrees and it feels cold, you can set the thermostat to 20 degrees and the room begins to warm up. A thermometer, on the other hand, simply measures the temperature in the room. Interestingly, as it does so, it conforms to the room because the thermometer (at least the old-style thermometer!) has a little mercury in a small bulb at the bottom of the thermometer and this mercury expands or contracts depending on the room temperature. As the room gets hot, it expands and shoots up the glass and as the room gets cold, it contracts and goes back down the glass. So, in a strange way, the thermometer doesn't just measure the temperature of the room, it really conforms to it. The thermostat, as I said, sets it.

In any case, the remark I overheard reminded me of an illustration about the Christian life which I heard some time ago. I can't remember the details of it, but it all revolved around the importance of maintaining a consistent Christian witness.

A Christian, walking into an event, or a room or a conversation needs to try to be a thermostat rather than a thermometer.

If you are like the thermometer, you will simply conform to the speech and behaviour that is going on around you. Incidentally, weddings can be occasions when you need to be particularly careful in all these ways. It is not wrong for drink to be available at a wedding (our Lord provided wine at the marriage of Cana) but when it begins to flow too freely and when language begins to become inappropriate – or worse, such as 'filthy language' (Colossians 3: 8) or 'coarse joking' (Ephesians 5:4) – and when inhibitions begin to disappear as people then make their way to the dance floor, you need to be careful that you can stand apart from all that and be different.

Weaker personalities, or people of very weak faith, or people who are caught off-guard can sometimes be easily seduced into saying and doing what they wouldn't normally do. And the danger with such weakness is that there may be a fall and then another and, before long, a going back (backsliding) so that 'after having escaped the pollutions of the world...they are again entangled in them and overcome, and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning...and the dog returns to its own vomit and the sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'.

On the other hand, if you behave like the thermostat, you will try to set the temperature rather than conform to it. Sometimes, perhaps most of the time, you will only be able to do so by setting an example which you pray might at least restrain others even if they do not conform to it. You can do so in your speech which, even when good humoured, will not run to excess and will always be 'seasoned with salt' (Colossians 4: 6) and in your behaviour which will see you careful to be always 'walking in the light as He is in the light'.

Sadly, probably most of the time, the attempts you make to reset the temperature will not work and on many such occasions the Lord's people will be the first to disappear, saying with the apostle Peter, 'we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the gentiles when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries' (1 Peter 4: 3).

But it's worth reminding yourself that even by having 'no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness' you do nonetheless 'reprove' or 'expose' them (Ephesians 5: 11) and, more telling still, by your attempts to reset the temperature, even by your abstinence from certain forms of speech and behaviour, you make them think – because 'in regard to these things, *they think it strange* that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, (even if they end up) speaking evil of you' (1 Peter 4: 4)

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Solemnly, too, you know that, for all this, 'they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead' (1 Peter 4: 5).

Your minister

NEWS & EVENTS

GOOD NEWS FOR EVERYONE RALLY

GOOD NEWS for Everyone! (formerly Gideons UK)

Western Isles Branch Annual Rally

Associated Presbyterian Church, Keith Street.

Friday 2 June 2023 at 7.30pm

Main Speaker: Rev. Kenneth Stewart



GAMBIAN ORDINATION SERVICE

The ordination service of Rev Sylvester Konteh, along with the constitution of Brikama Reformed Presbyterian Church took place on 13 May. Rev Stephen McCollum (Airdrie RP Church) and Rev Peter Loughridge (North Edinburgh RP Church) visited Gambia for this purpose.



THE CHURCH IN ISRAEL



“How much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?” (Romans 11:24)

In AD 70, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans under Titus. It is said that not a single Jew was left alive in Jerusalem, as all were either killed or taken away as prisoners. The Romans destroyed much of the city, including the second temple, the very centre of Jewish life. Most of the information on the destruction of Jerusalem comes from the writings of the contemporary Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37-AD 100). According to Josephus, over a million Jews died as a result of either violence or famine. It has been noted that this number exceeded the entire population of Jerusalem. This has been accounted for by the fact that many were thought to have travelled to Jerusalem to partake of the Passover, but got trapped in the siege.

Last month marked the 75th anniversary of the creation of the modern nation state of Israel. On 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of Israel, read out Israel’s Declaration of Independence, leaving Jews free to return to and govern themselves in their own land. Immediately after, Israel was attacked by 5 neighbouring Arab states. The Israeli-Palestinian issue remains one of the world’s most enduring conflicts with numerous political efforts made to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A popular Palestinian rallying cry is, “From the river to the sea,” referring to the land from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean, “Palestine must be free,” typically meaning that that the land should be free of Jews. Meanwhile, in the West, there is a leftist form of identity politics, increasingly hostile to the Jewish people. To many, the fact that the modern nation state of Israel has made it to 75 years is quite remarkable, given both the hostility it has faced from Islamists in the Middle East and more recently from leftists in the West. This is all the more remarkable when we remember that, prior to 1948, the Holocaust was a Satanic effort to annihilate the Jews, yet they as a people survived. The question which many fail to ask is, does God have a particular purpose for the Jewish people?

Jewish Blindness

In the Old Testament, the Lord set apart Abraham’s descendants, one special nation in the earth, God’s own chosen people. He led them out of Egypt, fed them, protected them and led them through the Red Sea. He made promises to them of spiritual redemption and from them came the promised Messiah, yet when He came, His own people rejected Him.

The words, “Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24) surely speaks of the events of AD 70, when the temple was demolished and the Jews were dispersed from the land. Since then, for the most part, Israel has remained a blinded

nation that has sat in darkness in a state of national reprobation. Yet, the Scripture states that this blindness is “in part” (Romans 11:25). In other words, this blindness will not be continual or final.

Jewish Conversion

Concerning this blindness, Thomas Boston preached a sermon in 1716, where he stated, “There is a day coming when there shall be a national conversion of the Jews or Israelites. The now blinded and rejected Jews shall at length be converted into the faith of Christ, and join themselves to the Christian Church.”

In Romans 11, the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, used the illustration of an olive tree to refer to three periods of God’s dealings with the world; first Jews, then Gentiles and then both Jews and Gentiles. Firstly, in the period of Abraham to the Day of Pentecost, God dealt almost exclusively with the Jewish people (aside from some significant exceptions, including Ruth and Rahab). Paul speaks of the end of the Jewish period when he refers to “their fall” (v12) and “their being cast away” (v15).

Secondly, from the Day of Pentecost to a future date, which is unknown to us, God has been dealing primarily with the Gentiles. As Paul says, the end of the Jewish period led to the Gentile period: “their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles” (v12). The sense here is that the Jews, by their fall, lost their blessings and privileges. Their loss was the gain of the Gentiles, as the treasures of the Gospel were transferred to the Gentile nations, which eventually led to the Gospel arriving on our own shores.

Finally, the Apostle makes it clear that, despite their present unbelief and rejection of Christ, there will at some point be a future conversion of the Jewish people, as, “God is able to graft them in again” (v23). “How much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?” (v24). The Gentiles have been grafted into the tree, although they are not the natural branches, yet one day, Israel, the natural branches, will be grafted back into their own olive tree. When the Jews are grafted back in, it will be as regenerate Christians. At that point in time, God’s dealings with the world will be with both Jews and Gentiles. It is important to note that Replacement Theology, the idea that the Church has replaced Israel in God’s plan, is not found in Scripture. There is one olive tree, one Church of Christ throughout the Old and New Testament and one way of salvation. The two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, are made one in Christ.

Some Reformed writers understand the phrase, “all Israel shall be saved” (v26) to refer to spiritual Israel, in other words, all the elect of God, rather than ethnic Israel, the Jewish people. It is difficult to accept such an interpretation, as “Israel” is used throughout the passage in contrast to “the Gentiles”. This is the position that Professor John Murray took when he wrote, “If we keep in mind the theme of this chapter and the sustained emphasis on the restoration of Israel, there is no other alternative than to conclude that the proposition, ‘all Israel shall be saved’ is to be interpreted in terms of the fullness, the receiving, the in-grafting of Israel as a people, the restoration of Israel to gospel favour and blessing and the correlative turning of Israel from unbelief to faith and repentance” (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p.99). Murray also helpfully observed, in relation to v28, that Israel are both “enemies” and “beloved” of God at the same time. “‘Beloved’ thus means that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with their fathers.”

Jewish Return to the Land Prophesied

The return of the Jewish people to their own land in 1948 is not without spiritual significance. In reference to the words, “And bring you into the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:12), Spurgeon stated, “The meaning of our text, as opened up by the context, is most evidently, if words mean anything, first, that there shall be a political restoration of the Jews to their own land and to their own nationality; and then, secondly, there is in the text, and in the context, a most plain declaration, that there shall be a spiritual restoration, a conversion in fact, of the tribes of Israel.” This is perhaps even more emphatic in Zechariah, given that Zechariah was writing after the return of the exiles to Jerusalem, “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

The marvel of the preservation of the Jewish people, despite great hostility and wickedness shown towards them, is something that was not lost on Jonathan Edwards, who saw God’s preserving hand in their

continued survival as a nation. “There is undoubtedly a remarkable hand of providence in it. When they shall be called, that ancient people, who alone were so long God's people for so long a time, shall be his people again, never to be rejected more. They shall be gathered together into one fold, together with the Gentiles” (The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1, page 607).

Prayer for Jewish Conversion

The expectation of the future conversion of the Jewish people is a Confessional position. Question 191 of the Larger Catechism, in response to the question, “What do we pray for in the second petition of the Lord's prayer?” is answered as follows, “We pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in.” Likewise in the Directory for Public Worship, we are directed to pray for, “The propagation of the gospel and the kingdom of Christ to all nations; for the conversion of the Jews, the fullness of the Gentiles, the fall of antichrist, and the hastening of the second coming of our Lord.”

In prayer meetings, in some of our churches, we rightly hear some of the men praying that the Lord would be pleased to once again bless His ancient people, the Jews, and graft them back into their own olive tree.

Israel and the Reformed Church

There are more than seven million Jews currently living in Israel, which is more than 70% of the Israeli population. There are thought to be less than 200,000 Christians in Israel, which is less than 2% of the population. Recent reports suggest that there has been an increase in the number of Christian congregations in Israel, but it appears that the vast majority of churches in Israel are Dispensational and Pentecostal. It would seem that faithful Reformed churches in Israel are few and far between. Is there a case to be made that Israel has been neglected by the Reformed Church?

If it is the case, which we have sought to make from Scripture, that God has a particular purpose for ethnic Israel, ought not the Reformed Church seek to be engaged in that on the ground? The nineteenth century Scottish Church were awakened to the subject of the Jews and saw it as both their duty and privilege to promote their cause amongst the Church, which included the visit of a number of ministers to the land, more of which can be read in the book, A Mission of Enquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland. Should not the Reformed Church be both praying for and working towards, under God's blessing, establishing a faithful witness throughout the land of Israel?

Scott Maciver



The Word of God
is like a **LION.**

You don't have
to defend a lion.

All you have to
do is **LET THE
LION LOOSE**
and the lion will
defend itself.

🐾 Charles Spurgeon

GOSPEL FEAR—JEREMIAH BURROUGHS

Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1646), was a brilliant Reformed preacher of the Gospel, and an astute theologian. He ministered with pastoral sensitivity and a zealous desire to glorify God in his preaching and writing.

The fear of God is a primary spiritual grace deposited in the redeemed and pardoned soul. Scripture is filled with directives in obedience before God based on godly fear because it is a principal grace; it is part of the beginning of grace. Why are not more Christian books taken up with the fear of the Lord? It is because at the outset, such seems to be very offensive to modern Christian sensibilities. And yet, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding,” (Prov. 9:10).

Many Christians look to Christ like they look to a boyfriend or girlfriend, rather than as the holy God who deals with sin through infinite wrath on the cross. Christ directed his disciples to a holy fear of God (Matt. 10:28). Jesus is the loving Saviour, but this is bound up in the astonishment and amazement and respect of God’s being and character in relation to sin and salvation. He is to be feared.

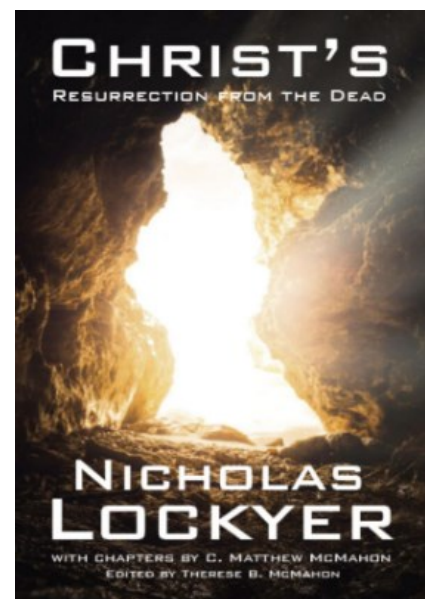
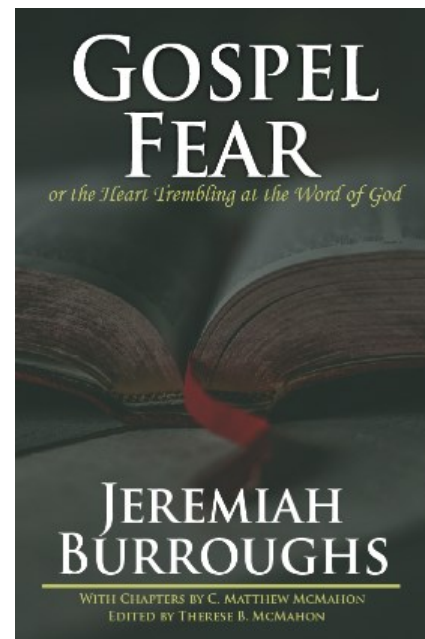
What is godly fear? Jeremiah Burroughs will answer this more than adequately. He uses his primary text in Isaiah 66:2, “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Knowledge of the word of God produces and cultivates the fear of God in Spirit-endowed believers. It produces a trembling and contrite Christian. As a result, he will show that Scripture informs the pardoned soul to understand God in the light of holy fear and trembling, in turn that becoming a tender heart to follow the word and will of God, as he demonstrates further from 2 Kings 22:14, “Because thine heart was tender....” Holy dread and tenderness of heart are inseparably linked together as Gospel-Fear.

CHRIST’S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD—NICHOLAS LOCKYER

Nicholas Lockyer (1611–1685) was a puritan divine with an exceptional preaching ability and fervent spirit towards reformation.

From Acts 3:26, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities,” Lockyer teaches on the foundational doctrine of Christ’s glorious resurrection. As Lockyer sates, “The hope of man is founded upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead.” Such a work of God to redeem fallen men from the justice and wrath of God, one finds the resurrection of Christ bearing the confirmation of God’s oath to the elect for the accomplishment of their eternal good. And in this, rests the infallible determination of Christ’s state as the natural Son of God, and so the messenger indeed of the covenant of grace.

More than any other miracle of the New Testament, the resurrection is the foundation on which our Christian faith rests. Jesus had to be raised from the dead for the cross to be effectual, for his death and resurrection are both essential for redemption. Our resurrected Saviour is our Chief Cornerstone, the Author and Finisher of our faith, our triumphant King who conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave, rose from the dead and ascended into glory to the right hand of God.



Children's Corner



Dear Children,

I hope you can remember what you read about in last month's magazine?

We were looking at a young man called Hudson Taylor who felt that God was calling him to be a missionary in China. Do you remember how he thought that he couldn't do such a difficult and important work because he wasn't trusting God enough?

He realised he needed to pray more, and he needed to see God using his prayers in other people's lives before he would be strong enough to leave England. Hudson knew that no one could help him in China except God so, when the old doctor he was working for forgot to pay him at the end of the week, Hudson decided just to pray to God instead of asking the doctor.

Do you remember too how he found himself praying with one very poor and hungry family and how God tested him by seeing if he would give them his last coin to – believing that God would still provide for himself? Well, he gave them the coin because the Bible says that 'he that gives to the poor, lends to God' and, amazingly, the following day someone sent him a package with four times the amount he had given away!

But Hudson's difficulties weren't over. The old doctor who was giving him work was still forgetting to pay him. The days and the weeks passed, and Hudson still wasn't getting any money.

Then one late Saturday afternoon, Hudson was down to his last coin again! (Sometimes, God let's things go very far before he helps us – to test our faith). That afternoon, the doctor suddenly asked Hudson if it was time to pay him. Hudson was glad he remembered and told him that he was supposed to have been paid weeks ago! The doctor was so sorry and wished he had thought of it earlier in the day because all the money from the surgery had gone to the bank already.

After being so glad, Hudson was now so disappointed! But he remembered that he was learning to pray and to trust God, so he went away and fell on his knees in prayer and earnestly cried to God for help. After he prayed, he felt stronger, and he also felt sure that God would still help. He was due to pay his rent that night and he knew his last coin wasn't enough to pay it, but he trusted God to find a way.

Hudson stayed on at work for another few hours and just as he was getting ready to go home, he heard the old doctor coming in the door. The old doctor was glad to see Hudson was still there because one of his richer patients had come round at 10pm that night to pay his bills with cash – although he could have paid by cheque at any time (you can ask someone what a cheque is)! Since the doctor now had money to pay Hudson his wage, he came round to find him before he would go home – and he gave him extra as well!

So, Hudson – who had empty pockets a little while before – now had a hand full of notes! And he also had more proof that God answers prayers! And now he felt ready to go to China!

I hope you learn to pray and to trust God as Hudson did. Remember that God hears and answers prayer but very often we don't receive because we don't ask. Remember too that you must begin by trusting Christ as your Saviour and asking him to forgive your sins and give you eternal life.

Love and prayers