



November/December 2023



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,

Soren Kierkegaard, the famous philosopher, used to tell a story (I assume it is apocryphal) of a circus that caught fire. Since the circus was situated just outside a village and only separated from it by a grassy field, it was clear that the fire would spread quickly into the village itself. The circus master called on the circus clown to jump on his bicycle and cycle to the village to warn them of the fire. However, the sight of a clown cycling through the village shouting, 'There's a fire coming towards the village!' just made everyone laugh. Sadly, the more animated and serious the clown tried to be, the more everyone laughed – until the fire raged into the village and destroyed many of their wooden homes.

Although I heard this story a long time ago, it came back to me recently when I was speaking to a university student about his negative experience of Christian Union at one of the mainland universities. He was particularly disappointed with the superficial worship and their loose witness to unbelievers (there were, of course, young men and women who were very much exceptions). I told him that these kinds of problems with CU were not new, and I went on to tell him of my own first encounter with them at the CU stall during 'Freshers Week' in the mid-1980's in Glasgow.

As a fairly recent convert, new to the city, I was very keen to be involved but, as I approached the CU stall, there were several people there dressed as clowns – in full clown regalia! – while distributing invitations to the first CU meeting. I went up to one of them and asked why they were dressed in that way, and they answered that they were trying to show people that they were willing to be 'fools for Christ' (even then I knew that was a rather strange way of understanding and applying the words of 2 Corinthians 4: 10). Suffice it to say that the encounter ended my interest in going to CU – and it's unlikely that I was alone in responding that way: sometimes the world picks up on a foolishness that professing Christians are blind to.

In a generation like ours, increasingly ignorant of Christian truth, and of the Bible generally, it is all the more important that we are willing, eager even, to bear witness for Christ and that we strive to do so with *clarity*, *conviction*, and *consistency*. Paul famously told the Christians in Corinth – and, by extension, all Christians everywhere – that they were living '*letters, known and read of all men*' (2 Corinthians). If we are, effectively, walking bibles, how vital that the writing be legible, logical, and persuasive! Just as the trumpet ought to give no uncertain sound, neither should we. Although we cannot be entirely responsible for how people respond to us, we must still take care to remember that we are representing our Saviour in word and conduct. Dressing up as clowns only makes us look like – clowns! Rather, 'let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven' (Matthew 5: 16)

Your minister

NEWS & EVENTS

RESOURCES SENT TO GAMBIA

Recently, **The Gambia Partnership** sent out two pallets from Stornoway to Gambia via shipping container, which arrived last month. The delivery included 300 Bibles, 150 Psalm books, Muslim and Roman Catholic evangelistic tracts, theological and school books along with audio Bibles in local Gambian dialects. Pastor Sylvester Konteh and Emmanuel Coron took delivery of the pallets and are pictured, on the next page.

We have found a reliable shipping agent, which we have now used a number of times. We hope to send out further pallets soon, with resources which will be of benefit to the Gambian Churches.





Pastor Sylvester Konteh & Emmanuel Coron



Audio Bible

THANKSGIVING COLLECTION

On Thursday 23 November, at our Thanksgiving Service, we will have a collection, which will go towards **The Vault** by Sermon Audio.

Cancel Culture

We hear much today about Cancel Culture, where the left are waging a war on anyone expressing a view, which is deemed unacceptable in today's modern society. Cancel culture is an attack on freedom of speech. This includes the world of technology, where Big Tech companies seeks to ban the voices of those using their platforms, who do not agree with and abide by their agenda.

We ought to be aware that the level of hostility shown towards the Church is increasing, due to the fact that the Bible is full of what is considered to be culturally insensitive pronouncements, be it God's view of marriage, genders, the family, homosexuality, creation, the way of salvation, heaven, hell, or sin. There is plenty to offend. The Church, at large, is reliant on Big Tech to provide the technology required for our services to be made available online. As we see case after case of Cancel Culture, the Church and faithful ministers are likely to be increasingly targeted, due to online preaching that is deemed offensive.

"A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3)

Development of The Vault

In response to this impending threat, Sermon Audio are developing **The Vault**, which is essentially the construction of their own infrastructure, meaning that they will no longer be reliant on Big Tech, in order to broadcast online. On that basis, should attempts be made by Big Tech to cancel and remove faithful preaching from their platforms, those of us using Sermon Audio to broadcast our sermons, will not be impacted.

Sermon Audio stated, "there is a long-term, secure storage facility tucked away in the side of an icy mountain above the Arctic Circle between Norway and the North Pole, called the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, or more commonly referred to as the Doomsday Vault. Its purpose is to house all of the world's seeds securely so that in the event of an apocalyptic situation or a global catastrophe, the seeds will be preserved to allow nations to grow various foods again.

We are building a "doomsday vault" of our own. Except in this vault, we are housing the good seed of the preached word in the event of a catastrophic breakdown in relations with cloud providers and platforms. The bottom line is simple. It is imperative that we make every effort and take every step to ensure that the millions of sermons on Sermon Audio are preserved for posterity—for this generation and the next."

Funding

In relation to the funding, Sermon Audio stated, “when we first started on this journey, the Lord brought a generous donor who was burdened to help fund the construction of the \$400k space. The renovation stage is now complete, but we must now raise \$1M to acquire the servers, storage arrays, and raw equipment needed to build the actual infrastructure of The Vault proper. Pray that God will continue to provide the manpower and materials needed to complete this journey. This is a monumental project and will take us far outside our comfort zone and far beyond our financial ability. Building cloud infrastructure is cost-prohibitive which is why Big Tech is so powerful.”

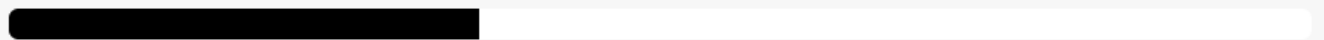
Our Collection

These are vast sums required to fund The Vault. We might be tempted to think that we can do very little to impact on their **\$1,000,000 target** or simply that others will fund it. Yet, if each church did their bit, prayerfully and by raising funds, that target might not seem so unattainable. That aside, many of us regularly listen to and watch sermons online. How would we react if, all of a sudden, Sermon Audio was cancelled and removed from the internet and other platforms refused to broadcast sound preaching, as it was deemed too offensive?

If you would like to contribute towards the collection for **The Vault**, you can contribute to the plate via cash or envelope marked “The Vault,” at the Thanksgiving Service on Thursday 23 November or on the Lord’s Day on 26 November.



\$361,959 raised of \$1,000,000 goal



Recent Support

Cornelius, NC
\$1,000 • Oct 24

Ballyclare, Northern Ireland
\$250 • Oct 24

Dadeville, AL
\$500 • Oct 24

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS PURSUE HEAVENLINESS?



The pressures of secularism can mean that even Christians place more value on earthly things than heavenly, as if heaven was an afterthought in our lives and the really important things are to do with the here and now. This is entirely back to front, as James Durham realised and endeavoured to remind his hearers — Christians of all people should live in a heavenly way. Durham preached a sermon on the words, “Our conversation is in heaven ...” (Philippians 3:20). When it was first published it was titled “A Very Heavenly Sermon.” The following updated extract explains what is meant by heavenliness, and explains why as Christians we should pursue heavenliness.

The word “conversation” or “citizenship” implies both entitlement to the privileges which belong to a certain township, and a distinctive manner of living and behaving according to the customs of that city. For Christians, it signifies a joint interest with the saints (as they are fellow citizens with the saints; Eph. 2:19), and assumes a way, walk, and lifestyle like heaven — having a nature, inclinations, desires, designs, and qualifications that are distinctively suitable to heaven.

There is a sort of heavenliness which all Christians without exception should pursue, and which is indeed their duty.

Through grace, heavenliness is in a great measure attainable. Paul and other believers attained it. It means a suitability in respect of qualification, conformity and likeness, in so far as is incumbent to sojourners who are walking towards heaven.

It marks out the serious and suitably exercised Christian in a unique and contradistinguishing way from all others in the world. That Christian’s “conversation” is in heaven, while that of others is not.

Yet it’s not an ordinary and common thing among professing Christians, to have this heavenliness. “Many” (says the apostle) “walk, of whom I have told you, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ: but I and a few others have our conversation in heaven.” The “many” that he speaks of here, I take to be those of whom he speaks in the chapter 1, who preached Christ, but out of envy, and exhorted people to holiness, likely with more than ordinary fervour, yet they did not have this heavenliness.

WHAT IS HEAVENLINESS?

Prizing heaven

Heavenliness is when we set heaven in our sights as our own great aim and purpose, next to the glory of God. Just as having an “earthly” conversation means that you mind earthly things, and you keep inclining towards them, and are wholly or mostly taken up about the things of the world, so to be heavenly is to have your mind taken up about heaven, prizing, affecting and seeking after heaven and heavenly things. “Seek after, or set your affections on, those things that are above” (Col. 3:1).

Actively making for heaven

Heavenliness includes taking the way that leads to the end — using all means and duties that lead to heaven. Paul indicates the earnestness and ardency of affections that Christians ought to have towards heavenly things, and how very much they should, with holy care and solicitude, be busy in using all means, and practicing all duties, which will further and promote heavenliness. It’s the counterpoint of how the worldly are taken up and exercised with carking cares, leaving no stone unmoved to promote and attain their earthly goals.

Acting like we will in heaven

Heavenliness means walking like those who are in heaven. Instead of being conformed to the world, or like the men of the world, we are to be like the angels and glorified saints in heaven, according to our capacity. As we are taught to pray, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.’ It’s to be one of a kind with and have a natural suitableness and proportionableness to those who are glorified in heaven.

Visiting heaven often

Heavenliness means we are often in heaven as to our thoughts and affections, and our desires and delights. Although we live on the earth, we should have, as it were, more than our one half in heaven. David says, “Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul” (Psa. 25:1). We should make frequent visits to heaven — we should have much to do there, have much to-and-fro, commerce, correspondence and interactions in and with heaven. We should converse more where we love, than where we live. Scripture calls this walking with God, having fellowship with Him, following hard after Him, and so on.

WHY SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN PURSUE HEAVENLINESS?

In verse 17, the apostle exhorted the Philippians to be followers of him, and here he tells them that his conversation is in heaven. He proposes himself as our pattern in this, and the Spirit of God by him presses it on us as our duty to imitate him in this thing. It is not so singular a practice that he alone has the monopoly on heavenliness. It was common to him and other serious Christians according to their measure, which is why he doesn’t say “my conversation” but, “our conversation.”

A Christian’s “conversation” or “citizenship” should be heavenly because all that a Christian has is from and in heaven, and is some way heavenly.

Look, first, at the Christian’s nature. It’s from heaven; he is partaker of the divine nature, he is born of God, he is of the new Jerusalem, his Father is heavenly (as he is taught to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” or, “Our heavenly Father”)

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Where is the elder Brother? In the heavenly places. The Christian’s treasure is in heaven; his hope is in heaven; heaven is the city, the mansion, the rest, to which he is travelling.

Look, secondly, at the believer’s calling and his obligation. He is partaker of the heavenly calling (Heb. 2:1). Separated from the rest of the world, the Christian ought not to live as the world lives. He has a heavenly

law to walk by. He has heavenly promises to feed on and live on, and to comfort himself in. His happiness is heavenly. All the duties that he is called to are heavenly.

Are not his prayers and praises heavenly? and can a believer possibly pray and praise rightly and not be heavenly?

To be translated from darkness to light, to be a partaker of the sanctifying Spirit of God, to be a new creature, to have the spirit of adoption, to have boldness of access to God, to be an heir and a joint-heir with Christ, &c. — are these not heavenly?

Or if, thirdly, we look at the believer's company, is it not heavenly? We are come (says the apostle, Heb. 12) to God the judge of all, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, to the new Jerusalem (which refers to all the saints in heaven and the saints on earth), to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the first born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

In a word, whatever we look to, whether to the believer's nature, or to his end, or to the rule of his walk, or to the promises, or to his work and way wherein he is to go, it is all heavenly.

HOW CAN WE BE CONVINCED TO PURSUE HEAVENLINESS?

We should understand from all this what a high level of holiness we are called to. Many have clearly never walked under the conviction that holiness is necessary as a duty; otherwise it would not be possible that so many men and women, who are called Christians and profess a hope of heaven, could or would dare to live as they do — some in profanity, riotousness and gluttony, some in mere respectability and morality, and others in formality and hypocrisy at best.

Let me ask you in all earnestness, are you not convinced that this is a duty? or do you think that Paul was joking, or flattering, when he exhorts us to follow him in this? Or that it's possible to enjoy so many heavenly privileges, or be to any purpose performing heavenly duties, if you are not heavenly? Don't get the wrong idea about Christianity, as if when you are exhorted to be Christians, you are only invited not to be profane, or only to go about the externals of religion, or only to have a sort of mere sincerity in it. Indeed these things are good in themselves and we do not, we dare not, reject them, but rather commend them. But you are called to more, to much more!

I know some are so profane, and others are so misbelievingly discouraged, that when they hear such doctrine as this, they will be ready, the one sort to say, "Well, we can't all be saints!" and the other, "Sadly, whoever is going to be a saint, it won't be me!" But let all such mouths be stopped. We are called and obliged indispensably to be saints. If we are not saints here, we shall never be saints hereafter.

There are also some who have such distempered attitudes that they either put off all or most duties, or at least go about them very heartlessly, because they cannot attain perfection in them. But it's clear from the Scriptures that there is a kind of perfection that can be attained here in this life, which is this holiness and heavenliness. When you shall be called to a reckoning, God will not ask you so much whether you did not get drunk, whore, swear, lie, cheat, steal, or the like, as whether you were heavenly in your way of life? Holiness is not to be limited to some few particular duties, but is the requisite qualification of a Christian in all duties and in all actions. Whether Christians are praying, practising, hearing, reading, buying, selling, eating, drinking, or whatever it may be, they are to be heavenly in it all.

Reformation Scotland

James Durham (1622-1658) was minister in Glasgow for only eleven years but left a considerable number of writings. One of the co-authors of 'The Sum of Saving Knowledge', he is best known for writing what is still regarded as the classic Reformed work on church unity, division and schism, 'A Treatise Concerning Scandal' as well as a highly sought after commentary on the Book of Revelation.

Children's Corner



Dear children,

This month (November) is the month when we have a harvest thanksgiving service when we thank God for the gathering of crops. People have always given thanks to God for the harvest, even long ago in the days of the Old Testament.

I think we are so used to buying our food from the shops that we forget that most of our food comes from the ground. None of the fruit or vegetables would grow without the mixture of rain and sun that God gives us in his kindness. So, it's a good thing to thank God for the harvest.

We usually have the Thanksgiving service on the fourth Thursday of November. That's when they have it in America as well! I often think they seem to remember thanksgiving much better in America – I wonder why?

A long time ago, around 1620, some Christians had to leave England because people were being cruel to them. They crossed over to America. It wasn't the big, powerful country in those days that it is now. When they arrived after being on the sea for over two months (imagine being on a boat that long!) winter was just starting. They got a terrible shock at how cold the weather was, and it was too late to plant crops and they had nowhere to stay. They had to stay *all winter* on the boat!

Since they were stuck so long on a boat with very little food, they got very hungry and many of them got sick. There were 101 men, women, and children to begin with but nearly half of them died during that first winter. When spring came, those who were left got onto land and began to plant and build. So, when the harvest came in the autumn of 1621, these brave and faithful Christians had plenty food to eat and plenty to store away for next winter. They wanted to give God thanks for sending such a full harvest and so they had a special time of thanksgiving to God.

Now, most Americans think very highly of those faithful Christians. They call them the 'Pilgrim Fathers'. When they came over, they helped so much in building their country and so they follow their godly example by having a day of thanksgiving.

The Bible often tells us to be thankful. Paul says, 'be thankful' (Colossians 3: 15) and 'in everything give thanks' (1 Thessalonians 5: 18). Also, when Jesus healed ten lepers, he was not pleased that only one of them came back to give thanks! (Luke 17: 11-19).

Whenever anyone shows you any kindness, always say thank you, especially to God, who gives us everything. Look up John 3: 16 and fill in these blanks and you can see what His greatest gift is!

'For God so _____ the _____ that He _____ His only _____ son,

that whoever _____ on _____ should not _____ but have _____ life'.

With my love and prayers,

Mrs S