

Filled with the Spirit!

COMPARED TO the Corinthian church, the Ephesian church had little problems for the apostle Paul. Yet he said to them *“do not be drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit”* [Eph 5:18]. Obviously there was the danger that some of the Ephesian Christians would fall into the sin of drunkenness by being filled with wine. Hence the warning to be filled with the Spirit.

What is it to be filled with the Spirit? To be filled with something is to be controlled by that thing. When we say someone was filled with wine, we mean he was controlled by wine. When we say someone was filled with rage, we mean he was controlled by rage. So, in the same way to be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled by God's Holy Spirit.

The tense of this Greek verb means to be constantly filled with the Spirit. It is not a 'one-off' experience but a continual ongoing daily experience. Each day we are to be guided and led and controlled by God's Holy Spirit.

There is a choice for the Christian. Having received the gift of faith, we must, says Peter, add to it all the various disciplines of holy living, love, self-control, kindness, etc [2 Pet 1:5cf]. We must

deliberately and consciously choose to be either filled with wine or some other stimulant and its vices, or be filled with God's Spirit and the accompanying virtues of godliness.

What are the evidences of being filled with the Spirit? What are the evidences that we are controlled by God's Holy Spirit? Paul often uses the evidences manifested in our human relationships. A man may be thoroughly correct in his doctrine but not be filled with the Spirit.

A man who is filled with God's Spirit is careful of his attitude towards people as well as his attitude towards God. Jesus said that the two greatest commands were love towards God and love towards our neighbour. Jesus was not asked for the two greatest commands, but for the greatest. He added the second because it was very important and was closely related to the first command.

The whole subject of good human relationships comes up again and again in Scripture as the evidence describing those who have tasted the love of Christ. The apostle John asks about the man who withholds kindness *“How does the love of God abide in him?”* [1 John 3:17].

James makes it perfectly clear that a bad spirit towards people, ie, envy, bitterness or self-seeking

comes from a devilish spirit and not from godly humility *“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic”* [Jam 3:13cf].

The first evidence Paul gave of the fruit of this Spirit is *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”* in distinction from speaking lies. Many people think this passage is a reference to what we should be singing in church but the context precludes this idea. The word is ‘laleo’ meaning talking. We need to talk honestly to each other about spiritual things. In other words we will be speaking God’s Word to each other.

Paul further tells the Ephesians that they ought to rejoice in the Lord and sing His praises. We ought to sing God’s praises all day long for we are enjoying God’s goodness all day long. We have to make music in our hearts to the Lord. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, there is reason for us to praise the Lord.

A thankful heart is also high on Paul’s mind as evidence of being filled with the Spirit. If we are not aware of God’s mercy to us, if we are not constantly aware of His protecting love towards us, we are lacking in spiritual discernment. We have to give thanks to God for *“all things”* not just some things. The Spirit-filled man can see God’s

goodness in all of life and his lips are constantly filled with praise.

The Psalmist in Psalm 107 was thankful. He starts the Psalm by stating his conviction that the mercy of the Lord endures for ever. He goes on to tell of those who sat in darkness, and those who travelled the seas, how they saw the works of the Lord and then praised Him for His goodness and wonderful works. He finishes by saying it is the wise who observe these things and understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Paul also mentions that being filled with the Spirit means having a submissive spirit. He goes on to detail the specifics of the relationships between husband and wife, parents and child, and employer and employee. One famous preacher has said that the best masters are those who have served. Those who have been under authority make the best masters of others. They understand and remember what it is like to serve.

Our relationships with our marriage partners and family and neighbours are an index of our relationship with God. Being filled with the Spirit means we have the mind and attitude of Christ towards all things and all people. When we cannot agree with people, we must not treat them as undesirables but seek to be at peace with them and treat them as we ourselves need to be treated - as fallen creatures dependent on the mercy and love of God. May we all be filled with God’s Spirit.

Legalism v. Liberty

THE WORD “freedom” has a variety of meanings for a variety of people. To Martha Stewart, it means early release from prison. To an Iraqi citizen, it means democratic rule following the elections in January. To a small businessman it may be defined in purely economic terms. To someone in a formerly communist bloc country it may mean the absence of social and political oppression. But what does “freedom” mean to the Christian? What does it mean to you?

In Galatians 5:13 Paul wrote, *“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”* Why did God the Father set his saving love on you? Why did God the Son die for you? Why did God the Holy Spirit call you to faith in that sacrifice? Freedom!

For the Christian, freedom means one of three things. There is, first of all, freedom from the condemnation of God’s wrath. This is what Paul had in mind in Romans 8:1 when he declared, *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Second, there is freedom from the compulsion of sin. Romans 6:14 assures us that *“sin will have no dominion”* over us since we *“are not*

under law but under grace.” Then, thirdly, there is freedom from the conscience of other people, which is the primary theme of the fourteenth chapter of Romans. It is on the third of these manifestations of Christian freedom that I want to concentrate.

The Threat of Legalism

There are people, professing Christian people, who are determined to bring you under their religious thumb. They are bent on making you a slave of their conscience. They have built a tidy religious box, without biblical justification, and strive to stuff you inside and make you conform to its dimensions. They are legalists, and their tools are guilt, fear, intimidation, and self-righteousness. They proclaim God’s unconditional love for you, but insist on certain conditions before including you among the accepted, among the approved elite, among God’s favored few.

I’m not talking about people who insist you obey certain laws or moral rules in order to be saved. Such people aren’t legalists. They are lost! They are easily identified and rebuffed. I’m talking about Christian legalists whose goal is to enforce conformity among other Christians in accordance with their personal preferences. These are life-style

legalists. They threaten to rob you of joy and to squeeze the intimacy out of your relationship with Jesus. They may even lead you to doubt your salvation. They heap condemnation and contempt on your head so that your life is controlled and energized by fear rather than freedom and joy and delight in God.

Rarely would these folk ever admit to any of this. They don't perceive or portray themselves as legalists. If they are reading this they are probably convinced I'm talking about someone else. They'd never introduce themselves: "Hi! My name is Joe/Julie. I'm a legalist and my goal is to steal your joy and keep you in bondage to my religious prejudices. Would you like to go to lunch after church today and let me tell you all the things you're doing wrong?"

I suspect that some of you are either legalists or, more likely, the victims of legalism. You live in fear of doing something that another Christian considers unholy, even though the Bible is silent on the subject. You are terrified of incurring their disapproval, disdain, and ultimate rejection. Worse still, you fear God's rejection for violating religious traditions or cultural norms that have no basis in Scripture but are prized by the legalist. You have been duped into believing that the slightest misstep or mistake will bring down God's disapproval and disgust.

When you are around other Christians, whether in church or a home group or just hanging out, do

you feel free? Does your spirit feel relaxed or oppressed? Do you sense their acceptance or condemnation? Do you feel judged, inadequate, inferior, guilty, immature, all because of your perceived failure to conform to what someone else regards as "holy"?

Jesus wants to set you free from such bondage! As Paul said, "you were called to freedom"!

Defining Legalism

Legalism has been defined in a number of ways, but here is my attempt. Legalism is the tendency to regard as divine law things which God has neither required nor forbidden in Scripture and the corresponding inclination to look with suspicion on others for their failure or refusal to conform.

So, how do I know if I'm a legalist? Here is a simple test, consisting of five questions.

(1) Do you place a higher value on church customs than on biblical principles? Many of our so-called "rights" and "wrongs" in church life are the product, not of the Bible, but family background, culture, social and economic factors, geographical locale, and a long-standing institutional commitment to doing things the way they've always been done. Once again, as long as the Bible doesn't prohibit such practices, you may well be free to pursue them. But you are not free to insist that others do so as well.

(2) Do you elevate to the status of moral law something the Bible does not require? Let me mention just a

few examples.

Whereas the Bible explicitly forbids drunkenness, it nowhere requires total abstinence. Make no mistake: total abstinence from alcohol is great. As a Christian you are certainly free to adopt that as a lifestyle. But you are not free to condemn those who choose to drink in moderation. You may discuss with them the wisdom of such a choice and the practical consequences of it, but you cannot condemn them as sub-spiritual or as falling short of God's best.

The Bible encourages modesty in dress. Both male and female are to be careful not to dress in a way that flaunts their sexuality or is unnecessarily ostentatious and seductive. But we have no right to condemn others for their wearing of colorful clothing or the use of makeup or a particular hairstyle.

The Bible condemns lust in no uncertain terms. But the legalist uses this to condemn as unholy everything from television to the internet to movies (even PG) to mixed swimming. Make no mistake: you may be significantly better off by severely curtailing your use of TV and the internet, and I strongly advise that you be more discerning than ever when it comes to the trash coming out of Hollywood that so often passes for "art". But these forms of media can also be powerful tools for the expansion and expression of kingdom truths when wisely utilized.

Parents are to raise their kids in the nurture and admonition of the

Lord. About that there is no mistake. As a parent, you may believe that all public schools are tools of the devil and cesspools of secular humanism. It is certainly your right to hold that opinion and make your decisions concerning your child's education accordingly. But you have no biblical right to question the spirituality of those Christian parents who would hold a different view. Whether you educate your children at home or send them to a private school or public school is a matter on which Scripture is silent. Hold your conviction with passion and zeal, but do not seek to enslave the conscience of others who may disagree with you.

(3) Do you tend to look down your spiritual nose at those who don't follow God's will for YOUR life?

Chuck Swindoll tells the story of a missionary family that served in a place where peanut butter was hard to obtain. This family arranged for friends in the U.S. to send them peanut butter so they could enjoy it with their meals. They soon discovered that other missionaries in the same country considered it a mark of spirituality that one abstain from peanut butter. It was their "cross to bear"! This family didn't flaunt their enjoyment of peanut butter but they did continue to thank God for it and enjoyed it in the privacy of their own home. But the pressure and condemnation from their fellow missionaries intensified to such a degree that the family eventually returned home,

disillusioned and cynical.

Someone might argue that the couple should have yielded and agreed not to eat peanut butter out of deference to the beliefs of their associates and for the sake of the gospel in that country. Perhaps. But to do so would also serve only to reinforce error in the minds of the legalists who insisted that peanut butter was “off limits”. You are not doing anyone a favor by behaving in such a way that you encourage or embolden them in their legalistic ways.

Part of being a Christian is the freedom not to eat peanut butter. But it is not part of being a Christian that you condemn others if they do. You are free to exercise your freedom, but you are not free to insist that others not exercise theirs!

(4) Are you uncomfortable with the fact that the Bible does not explicitly address every ethical decision or answer every theological question?

Legalists tend to fear ambiguity. The legalist’s favorite colors are black and white. They are uncomfortable with biblical silence and insist on speaking when the Word of God does not. They feel something of a “calling” to fill in the gaps left by Scriptural silence or to make specific and often detailed applications that God, in the Bible, chose not to make.

(5) Are you more comfortable with rules than with relationships?

I’m not talking about explicit biblical rules. In Psalm 119 we see the proper Christian response to

biblical laws and commandments and precepts and rules. We are to rejoice and celebrate in the laws of God and to happily and joyfully obey them. I’m talking about rules of your own making, rules you feel “led” to make as what you perceive to be the only legitimate application of what the Bible does say. God-given rules are good and righteous, but they are designed to enhance and develop Christian relationships, not stifle, crush, and kill them.

Why Would Anyone Want to be a Legalist?

What is the appeal of legalism? Let me mention five things that draw people to embrace legalism.

First, legalism provides us with a sense of security in that it enables us always to know precisely what to do in every conceivable moral dilemma. There is a certain sort of psychological safety in being stiff morally.

Second, legalism nurtures pride. “Look at what I’m willing to forego that others embrace! Others may indulge themselves but I have a discipline and a moral standard they lack. I possess a will-power that really loves God. Therefore, God really loves me” (with the implication that God doesn’t really love those who choose another path, or at least doesn’t love them as much as he loves me!).

Third, it provides an excuse to maintain control. One need never fear the unknown because there is always a rule or law (of my own making, of course) to govern every situation. After all, without rules

things will get out control (or so legalists think).

Fourth, there is comfort in conformity. It is always reassuring when other people live like we do, even if there is no explicit biblical warrant for it.

Fifth, some embrace legalism out of a genuine, heart-felt concern for other believers. They are actually motivated by love and compassion, worried that the spiritual welfare of others is at risk. They fear that others will assuredly "fall" if they walk down a certain path, even though that path is nowhere prescribed in Scripture (see especially Romans 14:4).

Conclusion

I have three concluding comments. First, the Christian is not free to do what the Bible forbids. Christian freedom does not entail the right to fornicate or to steal or to lie or to persist in an unforgiving attitude or to do anything else the Scriptures

explicitly prohibit. And a person who lovingly points this out to you is not a legalist for having done so!

Second, God does not want your Christian life to be characterized or dominated by fear and guilt and intimidation. He wants you to experience optimum joy, freedom, intimacy, and delight in Him. He wants you to enjoy your freedom and to use it in the service of love for others. This leads directly to the third, and final, conclusion.

Third, there is something more important than the mere exercise of freedom: love. Read Gal. 5:13 again. I strongly urge you to read my lesson on Romans 14 in the Biblical Studies section of the website where I discuss the reasons why at times we should forego an otherwise legitimate Christian liberty for the sake of others.

By Dr Sam Storms
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Sanctification and Obedience

IT IS ONLY AMONGST THOSE who know they are adopted sons and daughters, and who are living in an attitude of joyful gratitude for this fact, that true purity of life can be attained, Those who know they are loved by the Father, and who reciprocate that love choose to be holy because they are passionate about God. Sanctification is the lifelong process of growing towards moral perfection. It is the process by which we become more and more like our Father. It seems to me that a person who does not truly know God as Father will always find it hard to live a holy and blameless life. Such a person will see God as a Master who must be obeyed rather than a Father whose loving acceptance inspires obedience. He will live like a slave rather than a son. He will know that he is justified, but having failed to enter into the fullness of his adoption through the power of the Spirit, he will always find it hard to be fully motivated for holiness.

Mark Stibbe

The Gospel - and the Poor!

WHEN YOU hear the gospel being preached, how does it sound to you? Does it feel threatening? Do you sometimes feel scolded when the gospel is being preached? Assuming that the gospel is being preached as a genuine offer of mercy, it ought to sound like good news. If it doesn't, the reason is likely that we are not "poor in spirit".

When John the Baptist was feeling low in prison, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the Messiah. Christ's reply was to tell him "*the poor have the gospel preached to them*". The gospel sounds like good news to the poor, because it *is* good news to them! The poor have a sense of reality and know a good thing when they see it. They have an ability to distinguish between necessities and luxuries. The poor are in a position where they can 'welcome' the gospel and in which they 'need' the good news.

The poor are blessed not because they are more virtuous, but because they are less prone to hypocrisy. They are blessed, not because they are miserable, but because they have an innate advantage in being able to be dependent upon mercy naturally.

The poor are able to receive a gift freely. They know what it is to depend and live by faith and maybe this is what Jesus meant when He said: "*Blessed are the poor*". The gospel is good news, but one has to be a sinner to appreciate it.

Why did sinners enjoy being

around Christ? Why did the Pharisees object to the company Christ was keeping? Why do people find it so hard to come to church for the first time? Why is the first (secret) response of the 'unchurched' to an invitation to worship, often something like: "Why should I? It would only make me feel worse, not better"? Have Christians managed to convey the picture, however unwittingly, that the church is something like the Criminal Investigation Department, instead of a spiritual hospital where the chronically ill are welcome? Christ welcomed sinners. Was it not Christ who said that he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance?

At dinner parties Christ was able to make the self-righteous feel uncomfortable and the sinners very much at home. Could we do the same at our church meetings? Christ exposed repressed sin but he forgave open sin. Sinners found his gospel appealing, the Pharisees found it frustrating. Great sinners found they could turn to Christ through the gospel, while the respectable found they could not.

So, does it really matter how we live? Of course. All the above teaches us is that the way to become accepted of God is by believing. Our behaviour does matter, but it is simply not the way to be forgiven. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we be forgiven and accepted by God. That is the gospel. *GIM*

Six Characteristics of a Satisfying Marriage

WHEN MY WIFE, Kay, was undergoing treatment for breast cancer, the doctors hospitalized her about halfway through her 12-week chemo regimen because of her serious reaction to the therapy. The effects of the chemo plunged her into the misery of extreme nausea. Kay was wiped out, and I was keeping visitors away so she could get some sleep.

I sat there, quietly thanking God for my wife and for his amazing invention of marriage. With all its ups and downs, I'm certain marriage is God's primary tool for teaching us unselfishness, sensitivity, sacrifice, and mature love. As I looked at my wife, I saw that life is a precious miracle, and that I'm privileged to care for her in sickness and in health.

Reflecting on what makes a satisfying marriage, I keep returning to six characteristics that we as pastors need to hold up as a standard to our people -- and practice in our own marriages:

Communication – This is a skill you must learn through practice, but the bottom line is you've got to talk to each other. I read once in Newsweek that the average couple only spends four minutes a day talking to each other.

Consideration – The Bible teaches that we should show our love by being helpful to each other. Being considerate simply means paying attention to what your spouse says, showing common courtesy, and treating each other with respect.

Compromise – We're taught in the Bible that *"love does not demand its own way"* (1 Corinthians 13:5, LB). The unloving thing to do is try to change your mate; instead you should yield your rights and learn the art of negotiation and compromise. I've seen more marriages die from inflexibility than I've ever seen from adultery, alcoholism, or abuse.

Courtship – If there was more courting in marriage, there'd be fewer marriages in court. You need to date your mate, making your relationship a priority - specifically developing things you like to do together.

Commitment – I find it interesting that the media has finally discovered the value of commitment. Some headlines I've seen lately include: "Measuring our quality of life - happily married;" "Strong commitment brings satisfaction;" "Commitment - the key to marriage." There were many times in the first few years of our marriage when Kay

or I might have bailed out, but we'd locked the escape hatch, agreeing that divorce was not an option. This forced us to change, to become flexible, to learn compromise, and to grow out of our selfishness.

Christ – Jesus gives you the power and the desire to develop the other five characteristics. He gives you love when you run out of love. The greatest thing you can do for your spouse is to become like Christ and then begin to treat your spouse like Christ would. 'Marriage and Divorce' magazine discovered that one out of every three marriages ends in divorce, but when the couple is married in a church ceremony, and they attend church regularly,

and they pray and read the Bible together, then the chances for divorce drop to one out of 1,105.

When both of you love Christ even more than you love each other, then you'll automatically grow together: Christ is not going to fight with Christ.

As a word of testimony, nothing has challenged me so much as the challenge to build my marriage; yet nothing else in my life has been so rewarding. It is well worth the effort.

Article by Rick Warren

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John Murray on Deacons and Missionaries

"THIS IS A MINISTRY WHICH to a large extent has ceased to be an arm of the church. Governmental measures have virtually deprived the church of its ministry in the sphere of charity. Regrettably the church has been too willing to have it so, and to have this responsibility wrested from its grasp. The church's witness to Christ has been correspondingly impaired and this means of communion neglected. Notwithstanding all provisions for the poor in the so-called welfare state, there is ample scope for the exercise of this ministry, and the church needs to be alerted to the needs, in some cases appalling, that exist in this area of Christian opportunity and obligation. How significant is the word of the apostle: *"But when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go into the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do"* [Gal 2:9,10]....."

"The paucity of consecrated and endowed missionaries of the evangel is a commentary on the lethargy, coldness, indifference, lack of zeal on the part of the church. Mission is the vocation of the church and if men are not forthcoming for the special office, judgment must begin at the house of God, and judgment let us remember, to a large extent upon our prayerlessness."

The Beatitudes and the Gospel

JB PHILIPS has a rendering of the Beatitudes according to what many today would consider blessed

Happy are the "pushers": for they get on in the world.

Happy are the hard-boiled: for they never let life hurt them.

Happy are they who complain: for they get their own way in the end.

Happy are the blasé: for they never worry over their sins.

Happy are the slave-drivers: for they get results.

Happy are the knowledgeable men of the world: for they know their way around.

Happy are the trouble-makers: for they make people take notice of them.

Many of us can recite the Beatitudes from memory, yet when it comes to actually living our lives, we find ourselves yearning for talents, success and power. We think it is an asset to be assertive, and believe we will get on better in life if we feel adequate and confident. Modern society lives by the rules of the 'survival of the fittest' and without realising it, we are being influenced by them. It makes little difference that it may be church-

work that we are doing, the same thoughts and beliefs of the world can subtly underlie our strategies as we try to serve in God's Kingdom.

We need to learn to trust. We must learn to depend. God looks at us through an entirely different set of lens from that of the world. God looks for His grace at work in our lives, not at our natural gifts or talents or capabilities.

Hard Providences come to us to see how we re-act. Will we use God's grace or just blunder on getting through our trials by the sheer acumen of our own innate resources?

The Gates of Heaven open far more easily for people with virtues like dependence, repentance, a forgiving spirit, thankfulness, a longing for change, than for qualities such as capability, strength, assertion and self-sufficiency.

Who were the people that impressed Jesus while He was on earth? Who were the ones who made it into Christ's 'Memoirs'? A widow who had only two mites. A blind beggar. An unnamed centurion. A woman with five unhappy relationships. A leper who said 'Thanks'.

Who did Christ say would be great?

GIM

Congregational News

DUNDEE

We had an encouraging Easter Mission. We visited the community and gave out free gifts of food and received a pleasant welcome from everyone. There were leaflets in each pack with a suitable Christian message. On the Saturday we had 20 children from the community plus their parents coming to our Bible Treasure Hunt in Camperdown Park with prizes for all at MacDonald's! We finished our Mission with a Special Service on the Lord's Day in the morning.

John MacKay from Australia, yes, he has forebears in Sutherlandshire, spoke to us on evolution and the weakness of its claims. John is a Director of Creation Research and travels the world giving lectures and gives talks to universities and colleges. He was on a tour of the UK. His slides and talks were most interesting and it was good to have so many people from other congregations join us. His web site is: www.creationresearch.net

The congregation have been gathering stock for a Charity Shop which we have hired for two weeks in May in the Hilltown area of Dundee. There has been a lot of work put into this project which we hope will generate funds for our many commitments, including a

disability access ramp which is now legally compulsory for all public buildings.

As usual we hope to have our Weekend Away in August. This is the time when we have the children of our Sunday Club and their parents with us for a weekend camp finishing off with a service in our church.

As mentioned in the last issue, we hope to have two new elders ordained soon. We have now received the voting forms back from the members and we have provisionally arranged for their ordination to be held on Sunday 12th June DV.

Please pray about all these matters and that God would bless our efforts at contacting the local people with the gospel. We are thankful that we still get people in our community coming in to worship with us.

HARRIS

The congregation enjoyed its communion season at the end of April taken by its Moderator and a former colleague well-known in the past, Revd D A MacIennan presently in the Church of Scotland in Kinloch. However, it was saddened that so many were unable to attend through

illness. Please remember the Harris congregation in prayer.

STORNOWAY

The coming of Spring has meant that the Island of Lewis is once again being invaded by Missionaries reporting on their work worldwide. They usually leave a blessing behind them. WEC, SASRA, Society for the Distribution of Hebrew Scriptures, Tearfund, The Christian Institute among others have all spoken in recent weeks.

The congregation have enjoyed several visiting speakers from the mainland including Revd Ross McFarlane and the Revd George Hargreaves of Operation Christian Voice. At the time of writing, it is looking forward to having Jerrold Lewis from Vancouver at its May Communion as Jerrold is to sit his Licensing trials the previous week at the Scottish Presbytery in Inverness.

INVERNESS/DINGWALL

The work of the Gospel in the congregation has continued. For that we are thankful, and we look to the Holy Spirit to accompany and apply the preached word. Apart from reporting on what we are doing, I wish to put before you, the reader, a prayer request. It is in two parts. First, that those of us who profess the name of the Lord Jesus will be consistent witnesses to His grace,

and that we will have a better understanding of Christian living and a richer experience of walking with God.

The second part of my prayer request is that those who do not have their personal trust in Jesus Christ for salvation will be convicted and converted to him.

In terms of meetings, the regular Men's meetings, and Ladies' Meetings have finished for the Session, as has also the Book Reading Club.

In the first week of May, the Orphanage Club had their collection of items, and another impressive display of things to be transported by Blythswood to needy children in Europe.

A special 'Hustings Meeting' was held three days prior to the General Election. This gave good opportunity for questioning the candidates, or their representatives, on a wide range of issues.

On Lord's Day, 8 May, the congregation had Jerrold Lewis, from Vancouver, preach at the evening service. His ministry was much appreciated and it was a pleasure to have him, his wife, and little son, Daniel, with us.

The congregation continues to try reaching the community with the gospel message. All who have an interest in reaching those outside 'church circles', realise that while one person must plant and another must water, only God can give the increase.

So, we ask that you carry this work in prayer. The promise we fall

back on is that God's word will not return to him having failed in its purpose.

EDINBURGH

Six months in Edinburgh. It's hard to believe but in another eight days we will, DV, be six months in Edinburgh. What a beautiful city this is. I have never seen such lovely blossom all over the city. It would be easy to visit Edinburgh and believe there was no material or spiritual need.

What challenges me is the extreme need in Edinburgh today. Verses that have spoken to me over the years are Isaiah 58:6-12 *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: To loose the chains of injustice And untie the cords of the yoke, To set the oppressed free And break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-When you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.*

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry

and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations and you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."

What is your view of poverty? Does it make you uncomfortable? Do you think people have made their own bed and need to lie in it, and not bother the state to provide, or not complain regardless of how inadequate the help, or of course they can get work.

Some amazing, caring and lovely people are trapped with not enough money. We have to remember that poverty is relative to the society we live in. Yes, they can love and provide emotionally for their family but they do not have a nice house, it takes money as well as love to make a home, they also may have neighbours who create mayhem. They may have chronic health problems. They may be willing to work but cannot find employment. No one worthy of the name Christian should be prayerless or uncaring with regard to people in these very difficult situations.

Our children are settling well. Graeme and Nicola are in the middle of Higher and Standard Grade

exams. Pray for them at this stressful time and for the many other children at this stage in their lives. Melissa is going for two days work experience as part of third year.

We pray for more people to come to church and it gives us encouragement when they continue to come. One new person came on Sunday, a visitor from across town. Another one of the ladies who comes regularly took me aside and said, "My life has changed since I have come to church. I never prayed before and now I pray, I feel so much better. This made me feel so humble and blessed. Please thank the Lord with me.

As a result of a brawl in the local pub a week ago, a man in his thirties, who had two teenage daughters lost his life. What a tragedy. He lived in the Southhouse area where we work. What a need that people would read the tracts that come through the door and that we would take every opportunity to present the gospel of peace to them and that they would come to know Christ as their personal Saviour before it is too late. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers. May we do all we can.

Rev. Ian Penman of KLM Church was praying on Sunday that the stain of sin would be removed from the community and that the Lord would keep men from violence. Would you pray for this with us?

Morag Ross

We continue to feel encouraged although in the Christian life and work there are always plenty of

trials. However we are to be of good cheer for Christ has overcome the world. The services continue in Kaimes Lockhart Memorial. We are delighted to report that as well as the original seven three locals come regularly and a fourth has come twice. Others come from time to time but they have their own congregation and attend ours occasionally as a good will gesture and we genuinely appreciate this.

We decided to run a Christianity Explored course rather than a Ladies Bible study, in order that men could attend. We had 500 leaflets printed and requested help from the Faith Mission College for distributing the leaflets. The helpers who came were May Lee from China, Darren from Ireland, Bong Choon and Daesuk Yang from Korea, Irene from Scotland and Rona from Zimbabwe. Eddie from Brazil, a former FM student also helped.

It was lovely to see these different nationals going around Burdiehouse and Southhouse. It brought an international flavour to this small work. It was a powerful reminder that the church is anything but parochial, although it can work in the smallest locality.

The first CE course was on Wednesday 3rd May. We had wondered if anyone would come to the Community Centre for this or would it just be Morag and me. We were delighted when six more arrived. Some for spiritual help, we trust, and some to support us. How good is the Lord?

The following Wednesday

another two ladies came. Those who attended were delighted with the CE video. Everyone spoke during the discussion time.

Pray it bears fruit. Pray that some local men come. Numbers aren't everything, but without people attending there's not much prospect of a work.

I've had the great benefit of someone coming round the doors with me. It is much better when there are two people on the door it makes the situation much more relaxed for everyone concerned. Pray that there would be a sufficient pool of people to make this possible.

The other very happy development is that Blythswood are looking at a particular shop in the area and if it is suitable they will open it.

We hope and pray that it will prove to be of great benefit to the targeted area as we will have a place of worship, a contact point, a charity shop, support for Blythswood and support for outreach to the area. Blythswood are very enthusiastic about the project and we are most grateful to them. Please pray that any difficulties are overcome and everything falls into place smoothly.

John Ross

Moderator's Address - Revd John Ross, Edinburgh

Do Not Worry

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.

Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'what shall we eat?' Or 'what shall we drink?' or 'what shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry

about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own".
[Matthew 6:25-34].

In this beautiful and inspiring passage, we are reminded of God's wonderful provision for our needs and the futility of anxiety and worry. We should of course be thankful for life and for our bodies. We can be so anxious about food and clothes that we forget the marvel of being alive and the absolute wonder of our bodies.

We think unbelievers can be so materialistic, but the point is that we are just like them when we are all worried about food and clothes. The cycle of sowing, reaping and storing is beyond the power of the birds and yet they are fed by our heavenly Father. Many things in life are beyond our power but we can trust our heavenly Father because we are of much more value than the sparrows.

Worry accomplishes nothing and only blights the hours God gives us. The lilies show us that there is a natural beauty that only God can give and no amount of human power or resources can equal it. Yet the natural beauty of the lily vanishes so

quickly. We are far more important in God's eyes than these exquisite lilies, so let us trust Him.

The secret is faith. Trust God for everything. Realise, He cares, He knows what's good for us and He will provide for me. When we are burdened and full of care about food and clothes, we are just like the unbelieving world. Who of us can say we have not fallen into this trap?

The priority for us has to be, not all these material things, but putting the kingdom of God first. We can safely trust God for the rest. If our heart is set on God and loving what is right we are infinitely richer than the best dressed and best fed person who does not know God and cares little about doing what is right.

Concentrate on seeking God, doing what is right and enjoying today, rather than worrying about tomorrow, as if you were a spiritual orphan and didn't have a Father in heaven to whom you are infinitely more valuable than all the birds of the air and the flowers of the field put together. He cares for them, but He cares for you infinitely more. So do not worry, you of little faith.

John Ross

Money and Jesus

"WHOEVER OF YOU does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple" [Luke 14:33]. Richard Foster writes 'I have yet to go to an evangelistic meeting and hear that kind of statement made before the invitation is given. But that is exactly what Jesus did, not just once but repeatedly. For Christ, money is an idolatry we must be converted **from** in order to be converted **to** Him. The rejection of the god mammon is a necessary precondition to becoming a disciple of Jesus".

Build a Fire in the Pulpit!

PUBLIC PREACHING is effecting little change. To the glory of God, there are conversions, but they are rare. It seems possible for unbelievers, after hearing the Bible read and sermons preached, to return to unchanged lifestyles in pursuit of everything except God. It even seems possible for believers, after church services and Bible-study groups, to continue in life as if these spiritual meetings were no more than social encounters.

Ask yourself the question: When was I last fired with zeal and commitment to the Lord Jesus so that my life was changed for him? It is possible to appease the conscience with an assent to what is read from the Bible, and yet not to have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. "Bare assent to the Gospel, divorced from a transforming commitment to the living Christ, is by biblical standards less than faith, and less than saving" (J. Packer)

Packer's argument is that, if preaching elicits only an assent to the gospel, it secures "only false conversions". To profess to be a Christian, or to profess to be a preacher sent by God, necessitates belief that the gospel is God's message to save people from hell. It is meant to bring about changes in people's lives so that they come closer to God and begin to have the divine image restored in them.

There are two specific areas in which the Scriptures perform an indispensable function in spiritual experience. These are regeneration and sanctification. Sinners are born-again by the Word of God, and believers are sanctified through the truth.

No Christian is in a healthy state if the Bible is not making an impact on the mind and heart. No preacher should be satisfied if he does not see people being converted and believers being built up in the Christian faith through his ministry. If we believe that God's word does effect His purposes in people's lives, we cannot be at ease unless we see His work being done.

What is leading to the ineffectiveness of the Word of God in and around us? Is the gospel message not suitable for this period in history? You may be too pious to even question the 'status quo', but you need to face the reality around you. The church is losing out, it seems, in the battle for Britain.

Maybe the gospel is not really being preached, or maybe we have lost sight of what it is that makes the Word of God effective. These are important matters in which we need to examine their ministries.

Is the Gospel being really preached? Perhaps the focus in your church is wrong. It may be that your church is emphasizing the material rather than the spiritual;

maybe human rules have taken priority over divine instructions. Maybe your fellowship group is more concerned with people's outward appearance. Clothing worn to church - is it wrong to wear jeans or a hat or a trouser-suit or a sweater - any one, or all of these, may be the burning issue. Posture in worship may be the emphasis in your church; or adherence to an unwritten liturgy may be the point in contention. Perhaps the fear of what others will think is causing paralysis. How sad; serious, and solemn! How sad that matters, which at best are fringe and void of lasting spiritual consequence, should consume so much energy.

How serious, if the clear message about Jesus and his work is crowded out by an emphasis on these issues, as if God could not bless unless there was conformity to mere human preferences. How serious, if souls are on the way to hell because churches are preoccupied with externals and have lost sight of eternity.

Dare you judge the spirituality of a man, woman or child, by that criteria? Jesus upset the religious establishment of his time on earth. His message and his method caused disturbance. He would do the same today. We ask him to come in the power of the Holy Spirit to our church meetings, but do we know what we are asking for? Our ordered composure and starched control of proceedings would be shattered. Our doctrinal errors would be corrected - even the ones we think

that we do not have!

Our unchristian attitudes would be challenged. These cherished lusts and hateful thoughts would be shown up for what they are - corruption inside ourselves. When Paul preached in Corinth, he wanted to focus on Christ the Crucified One.

What makes the message effective? In one of his books on prayer, E.M. Bounds made the comment that "the church is looking for better methods, but God is looking for better men".

When Jesus sent out his messengers he told them not to be burdened with extra clothes and sandals. One astute paraphrase suggests that Jesus was in effect saying to them - Do not bother yourselves with that extra equipment - you are the equipment. God has committed to humans the task of representing him on the earth. What kind of God do you present to others? What kind of God do you preach?

Every church has tried different ways of attracting people, with the hope of presenting the good news about God, or at least as perceived by the church! Special services, different age groups, conferences, and a variety of input to worship services. None of these are forbidden in God's Book, and there is no virtue in merely insisting on either 'no change' or 'all change'. But in the push for the 'status quo' or for 'change', we are in danger of thinking that, one way or the other, we will gain God's blessing.

Perhaps the hope rests in a

different form of worship; a different venue, or a different preacher, or perhaps 'faithfulness to doing things the way we always did'. It has all been tried, but with what success? Perhaps the single major factor in the 'lack of success' in the life, work and witness of the church is carelessness or the neglect of prayer.

The Bible-believing preacher says that he needs God. He studies hard and long. Sometimes he preaches even with deep conviction and emotional involvement. He looks for the conversion of sinners and for the enthusiasm of saints, but he may look in vain. Why? The preacher may blame the unbelief of some, and the cold hearts of others, but perhaps the fault, at least in part, lies nearer home.

Bounds says that "God does not come into the preacher's work as a

matter of course or on general principles, but he comes by prayer and special urgency". The greatest Preacher of all went aside to be alone with his Father, and thanked Him for making known, even to babes, the riches of divine grace. God holds the key to the human heart. He holds the power to effect his message of grace.

If you are a preacher, meet with God and get your message from him, before you meet the people. If you listen to preaching, pray for the preacher, that he will come anointed with the unction of Heaven and that you will hear, not the voice of a man, but the voice of God.

Dwight L. Moody said, "The best way to revive a church is to build a fire in the pulpit." May I add to that: 'and have God light it' !

M. MacInnes

THE LABOURER AND HIS HIRE

The APC Presbytery, at its meeting on 11th May, agreed that it should be brought to the attention of our congregations that central income for the twelve months to 31 December 2004 fell short of expenditure by almost £15,000. There was a carried-forward surplus from the previous year which meant that the shortfall was covered.

However, it is clear that this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. Accordingly, this note intimates an urgent appeal to our people to prayerfully consider whether they can increase their givings, remembering that "*The Lord loves a cheerful giver*" [2 Cor 9:7] and "*The silver is mine and the gold is mine*" [Hag 2:8].

Because of an increase in the number on the payroll in May of last year, ministers graciously agreed to forego an increase in salary; but this cannot go on indefinitely, and it was decided that a 2½% increase would have to be implemented with effect from May of this year.

Keep this date Free!

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Illustration of Sin, Holiness

ON JUNE 4, 1961, the reactor on K-19, a Soviet nuclear submarine, malfunctioned. Though the danger was great, Russian sailors donned what gear they had and worked in rotating shifts to try to repair the reactor. They succeeded and the sub was saved, but not without cost. Within days, eight of the sailors died from radiation poisoning, and within two years 14 more succumbed.

Sin is something like nuclear radiation: Without proper protection, it can be deadly. And often, the results of such infection are not seen until later. Living in this world is like living in the presence of a leaky nuclear reactor. Sin is everywhere around us — in the air, so to speak — and the potential for absorbing it is ever-present. We have to work at remaining holy, which means putting on proper protection: obedience to the Word, prayer, worship, study, and fellowship with others who are pursuing holiness [Ephesians 6:10-18]. (Turning Point Daily Devotional, 4-25-05)

Are you Sacrificing in Ministry?

IN HIS BOOK 'A Godward Life' (Multnomah), John Piper writes about the life of Irving Hetherington — born in Scotland in 1809, called to preach in 1835, then called to go to Australia as a missionary. When he asked his fiancée, Jessie Carr, if she would go with him to the mission field, she replied, "Where you wish to take me, there I wish to go." And so in March 1837 they set sail for Sydney.

The first week en route, Jessie came down with a sore throat and fever. She told Irving she had no fear of death, because, "I have long taken Christ for my portion and set my hopes on Him." As Irving wept, Jessie died that same night.

Alone in Sydney, Irving was assigned a territory 50 miles long by 30 miles wide. Piper writes: "He rode a horse to his little groups of believers in rain and heat. When a drought weakened the horse, he walked. He tried to study on the way and get his sermons ready. His biographer tells the following story:

One Saturday night he had to walk thirty miles; and, after climbing a hill, and while resting on a log at the summit, the idea of ministers in Scotland complaining of being Mondayish after two services, and without other fatigue, struck him as so ludicrous that he could not help bursting out into a loud 'guffaw' of laughter, which sounded so strange in the darkness and loneliness of the bush.'

Piper continues: "What this powerful story did for me was to put the pressures of my ministry into missionary — and biblical — perspective. How easy it is to begin to assume that I should be comfortable. How quickly I can start to expect an easy and hassle-free ministry. . . .

"Here in America, where everybody speaks English and eats pizza, I bellyache over an extra meeting, an ill-timed hospital call, and too many choices. Then I read of Irving Hetherington, and I think of 'normal' missionary life. I see my 'sacrifices' in a new way."

Notice to Congregations

MINISTRY TRAINING FUND

The six-monthly collection (April and October) is now overdue. Have you sent anything to this Fund recently? In the past, the income for this Fund has not covered the expenditure. Can we expect God to raise up students if we are not preparing funds for them?

Please give in faith, praying that God would raise up labourers for His harvest.

The Joy of Faith

A boy was sitting on a park bench with one hand resting on an open Bible. He was loudly exclaiming his praise to God: "Hallelujah! God is great!" Along came a young man who had recently completed his first year of seminary study. Feeling himself very enlightened in the ways of truth, he asked the boy about the source of his joy.

The boy replied, "Don't you have any idea what God is able to do? I just read that God opened up the waves of the Red Sea and led the whole nation of Israel right through the middle."

The enlightened man laughed lightly, sat down next to the boy, and began to try to open his eyes to the 'realities' behind the miracles of the Bible. "That can all be very easily explained. Modern scholarship has shown that the Red Sea in that area was only 10-inches deep at that time. It was no problem for the Israelites to wade across."

The man, content that he had enlightened the boy to the finer points of theological truth, turned to go. Scarcely had he taken two steps when the boy began to rejoice and praise louder than before. The man turned to ask the reason for this resumed jubilation.

The boy exclaimed, "God is greater than I thought! Not only did He lead the whole nation of Israel through the Red Sea, He topped it off by drowning the whole Egyptian army in only 10 inches of water!"

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Congregations can, if they so wish, charge for their own distribution of the magazine, or give them away free.

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