

Losing Rewards?

WE BELIEVE THAT it is impossible to lose our salvation once we have been saved. If Christ died for our sins, and His sacrifice was accepted by the Father, then our sins are covered and payment has been made for them all. We cannot be lost. Our souls are safe.

However, there are two passages in Scripture which seem to teach that we can lose at least part of our reward in heaven, although our souls cannot be lost. One passage reads *"If anyone's work is burned, he **will suffer loss**; but he himself will be saved, yet so as by fire"* [1 Corinthians 3:15].

The other passage is *"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a **full reward**"* [2 John 8]. On top of these passages there are others which suggest that there is a loss of some kind. *"Therefore since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to **come short** of it...Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone **fall** after the same example of disobedience"* [Heb 4:1 & 11]. Also [Hebrews 6:4-6] states that *"it is impossible"* to renew again those who have fallen away.

All this is a **warning** to us not to

be complacent and careless regarding our way of life. The Apostle Peter reminds that those who refuse to *"add to"* their faith become *"short-sighted even to blindness"* [2 Peter 1:5-10]. Finally there is Jude who says *"I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe"* [Jude 5].

All these passages, written by four, maybe five different inspired authors, do suggest that Christians are in danger of losing something precious. It is clear from at least the Corinthian passage, that it is not salvation itself that is lost, but nevertheless something valuable can be lost if we live careless and fruitless lives.

Peter goes to some lengths not only to remind his readers but also to emphasise to them the great danger they are in if they neglect adding to their faith. He himself is facing death and tells them that he is soon to 'put off his tent', so his mind is focusing on important matters. Nothing like death focuses the mind on what is important and what is not important.

Peter does not want to be negligent in this duty of reminding

believers of the importance of adding to their faith, else they will become losers.

Paul is equally concerned and strong in his language in warning the Corinthians about the consequences of living sinful lives after receiving the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It **is possible** for Christians to build on the foundation of Christ, *"wood, hay straw"*. The fire is to test each one's work of *"what sort it is"*. It is only if our work *"endures"* will we receive a full reward [1 Cor 3: 14] .

For Paul, it seems to be the practical side of Christianity that counts, but for John it is the doctrine that must be kept. After mentioning about losing rewards, John adds *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of God does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house"* [2 John 9].

Both the doctrine and the practice is important. Some of us are faithful in the doctrine of Christianity but are not faithful on the practical side. If we are reared in a church that emphasises doctrine to the exclusion of godly practice, we will likely fail in doing works of mercy.

The apostle John said that he doubted if the love of God could be in someone who did not help a brother in need, *"whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother*

in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" [1 John 3: 17] .

John goes on to add *"let us not love in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth. And by this we will know if we are of the truth"* [18,19]. For John, practical godliness brought assurance that we belong to God.

Paul puts both the practice and the doctrine together when he writes to Timothy saying *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this ye will save both yourself and those who hear you"* [1 Timothy 4:16].

WHAT DO WE LOSE?

God cannot break his word. He will not fail to keep His promise. We need to remember of course that there are two kinds of promises. There are conditional promises and unconditional promises. God has given us salvation because He promised that those who believe will be saved. That is fixed. All believers will be in heaven. But there are some promises which He has made which depend upon our service and works. We will receive our reward in heaven according to our works (not because of our works). The degree and measure of our reward in heaven, is in direct proportion to our works on earth.

John tells us about his vision of the Lord Jesus telling the Church in Thyatira *"I will give to*

each one of you according to your works" [Rev 2:23]. He adds that after the sea, death and hell gave up their dead "they were judged, each one according to his works" [Rev 2013].

Our Lord Himself also said "when the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels...He will reward each according to his works" [Mat 16:27].

It seems plain then, that those who serve the Lord by engaging in works of mercy and practical godliness will receive more in the kingdom of God, than those who are careless and do not grow in grace. Jesus likewise made it plain that there are degrees in the kingdom of heaven.

There are those who are "least" in the kingdom of God and there are those who are "great" [Mat 5: 19]. Jesus also spoke of those who were the "least of these My brethren" [Mat 25 :40].

Of course, we cannot say that there will be an **obvious** distinction in heaven of those who have been faithful and those who have not been so faithful. There will not be any 'comparisons' in heaven, or any type of 'looking down' on lesser saints.

So, how we live does matter and has respect to our final destination. The Bible is full of warnings to Christians to follow on to know the Lord and to grow in grace. The consequences must be significant, else the apostles and writers of Scripture would not have been so careful to warn us in such

clear language.

The end of the wicked is given in similar terms A voice from heaven cried and said about those who remained in Babylon "repay her **double** according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix her double" [Rev 18:6].

Paul even prayed that the wicked would receive judgment correspondingly with their conduct when he prayed that Alexander the coppersmith would be repaid for his wickedness when he expressed the wish that he would be rewarded "according to his works" [2 Tim 4:14].

We need to take seriously all the warnings of Scripture. They are written says Paul "for **our** learning" [Rom 15:4]. If Paul found instruction in OT Scripture, so ought we. The Bible is for all ages and all cultures in all circumstances.

Each of us need to be personally diligent in making our calling and election sure by applying ourselves to our daily tasks in the home, school, office or workplace. God tests His people, not through extraordinary experiences, but through the daily life we are called to live, week in and week out.

It is through the daily disciplines of everyday life that the life of faith is manifest. Living with problems in a gracious way, humbly accepting our circumstances and trusting in Christ, brings it rewards. Neither Paul nor the apostles nor God, want any of us to lose out on any blessing that we otherwise could have had.

An Evangelist's Confession

The article below was sent in by Mr William Taylor, Thurso

MR BROWNLOW NORTH, the well known evangelist, was at one time - indeed, all through his early life - a very marked specimen of the thoughtless and dissipated worlding. He was for many years supposed to be the heir to a noble title, but a late and unexpected marriage came between him and his hopes.

When he was no longer a young man, he and a friend were staying at a shooting-box in Scotland. Their day's sport was usually followed by an evening's debauch; and in one of these his friend dropped dead. The terrible event was God's message to the heart of this hardened profligate. The awful thought laid hold of him: "If I had been called away instead of my poor friend, I should have been damned".

This led him to think seriously about his soul and, after passing through many agonising experiences, he was brought into the full light of the gospel. No sooner did he feel himself to be a changed man than he began to set about trying to win others to realise the same blessedness. In process of time he became one of the most noted preachers of that period.

It happened on one occasion that he was to preach in Inverness. Just as he entered the building a note was put into his hand, the contents of which were somewhat to this effect:

"Brownlow North, you miserable hypocrite! Do you remember what took place at ----- on such a date, and the part you bore in it; also at ----- on such a date, and again at---- on such a date, and the part you took on each of these occasions?"

Pretty full details of what did happen were given, and then the letter concluded: "Now, you wretched hypocrite, you know that every word in this letter is true; will you after reading it, dare to go into that pulpit and rant and rave and preach what you call the gospel?"

Poor Mr North felt the force of the letter keenly, but he put it into his pocket, and when the time came he read the familiar words: "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*". He paused and then with deepest feeling added: "*Of whom I am chief*".

"My friends," he said, "when I entered this building tonight a letter was put into my hands. I do not know who the writer may be, but he is evidently one who knows a great deal about my career in the past. This letter refers to three distinct occasions on which it charges me with participating in scenes of riot, and excess and wantonness. I will not pollute your ears by referring to the contents of that letter further than to say as much as this. And the writer concludes his most painful

communication by saying, 'Now, you wretched hypocrite, you know that all this is true; will you after reading this letter dare to go into that pulpit and rant and rave and preach what you you call the gospel?'

"Dear friends, there are three things that I have to say about this letter: First, it is all true. Would to God that I could deny the charges it makes! Would to God that I could undo the past, but that is beyond the power of even God Himself.

God knows it is true, and I confess with sorrow and shame that it is true.

And the second thing I have to say is, that it's all forgiven; God knows it is forgiven, and I know that it is forgiven. And the

third thing I have to say is that, if God, for Jesus Christ's sake can forgive the sin of such a sinner as Brownlow North, there is not a sinner in Scotland, there is not a sinner in this wide world too great for God to forgive him all his sins."

There were few dry eyes among those present as he uttered these words with the most intense feeling.

Reader, your sins may not be as glaring as Brownlow North's, but they can be forgiven freely by the same pardoning God, if you come to Him in true repentance. Should you die unforgiven there remaineth nothing for you but the blackness of darkness for ever. Now, His mercy would fain woo you for Himself. Be wise in time. Anon

Response to Our Generation?

"I ASK YOU NEXT, TO TURN back to our own land, and consider the state of our great cities. There are districts in our great metropolis, in Liverpool, in Manchester, in Birmingham, in the Black Country, where Christianity seems practically unknown. Examine the religious condition of East London, or Southwark, or Lambeth. Walk through the north end of Liverpool on Saturday evening, or Sunday, or on a Bank Holiday, and see how Sabbath breaking, intemperance, and general ungodliness appear to rule and reign uncontrolled...And then remember that this state of things exists in a professedly Christian country, in a land where there is an Established Church, and within hours of Oxford and Cambridge! Once more I say, ought not these things to 'stir' our hearts? It is a sorrowful fact that there is around us in the present day a generation of men who regard heathenism, infidelity, and irreligion with apathy, coolness, and indifference.

"Seeing and feeling are well; but doing is the life of religion. Passive impressions which do not lead to action have a tendency to harden the conscience, and do us positive harm. What ought we to do? We ought to do much more than we have ever done yet."

J C Ryle in 'The Upper Room'

The Number of my Days

THESE ARE FEW LINES in literature, the movies, or the headlines that come across as forebodingly as the prophecy “your days are numbered.” In murder mysteries, if someone’s days are numbered, there is probably a plot in the works to harm them.

If we read in the paper that a company’s days are numbered, we assume that it will probably file for bankruptcy or be bought out. If someone told you that your days were numbered, you would probably take this as a threat.

But should the thought that your days are numbered come with an automatic sense of gloom? The idea that God knows the number of our days prevails throughout Scripture. Although when we say that our days are numbered we mean that they are few, when God says that our days are numbered He means that nothing can hinder His plan for our life. If God can grasp the infinite, then to say He knows the number of our days does not necessarily mean that they are few.

We live in very uncertain and fearful days. Few of us have personal enemies that seek to do us harm, but we live with the threat of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet is this really possible? The psalmist says to God, “*All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be*” [Psalm 139:16]. We do not have to fear terrorists or

train wrecks or natural disasters because our days are numbered; God won’t let us die even one day before the day that He has chosen. This is every bit as true for a soldier going into combat as it is for a child being tucked into bed.

The many medical treatments available to us have an amazing power to extend our life expectancies. Yet the availability of so many cures may give us an artificial sense of control, or we may even feel like a new burden has been placed on us, the burden of keeping ourselves alive. But the words spoken by Job in his sickness are true: “*Man’s days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed*” [Job 14:5]. On the flip side of this truth is the hopeful reality that our life will not be one day shorter than God has determined it should be.

In light of this, we can rejoice in the means God has given us to live out the full length of our days. The psalmist prayed, “*Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*” [Psalm 90:12]. We do not know the number of our days. For us to number our days aright means that we recognize each day as a gift from God; He alone sovereignly holds the power of life and death. This is knowledge to make the heart rest.

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The Tablecloth -

a True Story

THE BRAND NEW pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On December 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary leaving a huge hole just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the service, headed home.

On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted

tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and embroidery work. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet.. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do

people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and she never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return. One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall

because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike. He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine. Who says God does not work in mysterious ways.

True Story - submitted by Pastor Rob Reid

Assurance

"GOD NEVER MEANT THAT CARELESS Christians, and those who are in a state of declension, and live without an abiding impression of his presence should enjoy a full assurance...[The reason why attaining assurance by such people] is so unfrequently made, is that Christians are very apt to make their hopes their idol. They think more of their hopes than of their holiness; more of their hopes than of God...They are more anxious to have the evidence that they are Christians, than to be Christians. What if they discover no evidence? Do they less desire to fear God and love His Son? What if they walk in darkness and have no light? Would they desire on this account to trust no more in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God? There is too much selfishness in such a religion as this, to be buoyant with hope...[Assurance] comes in the pursuit of holiness, and in the faithful and diligent performance of every duty".

Gardiner Spring

Important Update -

We publish below a letter sent on 12th July to inform the members of the Christian Institute to encourage them to continue to pray about the **Religious Hatred Bill** which they fear will have an affect on preaching the uniqueness of Christ as the only Saviour.

Dear Supporter,

MPs passed the Religious Hatred Bill last night. The Bill, which outlaws 'incitement to religious hatred', has completed its stages in the House of Commons. It now heads to the House of Lords where many observers expect the Bill to get a rough ride. Lords proceedings start in October.

A Lib Dem and Conservative amendment (The 'Lester amendment') was defeated by 291 to 233, a Government majority of 58. The amendment deletes the religious hatred offence from the Bill. It was the key vote of the evening. In a later vote the Government had a majority of 72 on Third Reading.

In fact things are not so negative as they seem. For one thing MPs will get to vote again when the Bill returns from the Lords, perhaps in January. There may be several more votes. For another thing, a number of surprising facts emerge from an analysis of the vote:

** The Conservative leadership seems to have downgraded the status of the vote and not used a three line whip. Consequently 39 Conservative MPs did not vote. If they had done, the Government majority might have been cut to only 19.*

** 14 Labour MPs defied the whip and voted for the Lester amendment. In addition many more Labour MPs did not vote. It could be that between 30 and 40 Labour MPs deliberately abstained.*

We are grateful to all supporters who contacted their MPs prior to last night's vote. Many of our arguments against the Bill were adopted by MPs who opposed the Government's plans. It was important that there was a witness to the truth. It was encouraging that there were so many Christians holding a peaceful demonstration outside during the debate. Some reports put the number at 2,000 - 3,000 people.

In due course, we will contact supporters with information regarding the Lords Stages.

There are many months ahead of campaigning. There is growing dissent on the Labour benches. There is everything to fight for.

I will email you soon on another important religious liberty matter.

Please continue to pray for all those in authority that they would preserve our freedom to live quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

*Yours sincerely,
Colin Hart*

Be Vigilant!

By Revd G I Macaskill, Stornoway

IT MUST NEVER BE forgotten that the purpose of the gospel is to engage with the world, not to opt out of it. The church's mission is to overcome the world with the gospel of the grace of God.

But every age needs to be vigilant, and fully aware of the obstacles opposed to the gospel peculiar to that age. We are reminded of the warning *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men"* [Col 2:8]

The following are some matters, innocent enough in themselves, that we must beware of in our times.

Public Opinion and the Media

One of the greatest mistakes one can make is to think that because something is popular, it is therefore correct. It is a serious error to imagine that if public opinion wants a certain law, therefore it should be enacted. Our politicians appeal to the public for their "view" on certain issues. If the public want it, then the politicians will give it to them. What is good is therefore defined as what people want? Public opinion, not God's Word

The media have fallen into the same trap. What sells a newspaper? What books do people buy? What programmes do people watch on

television? The press and TV are funded by advertising and financiers, so they cannot afford to stand up and oppose what they know will affect their income. Therefore we get an unbalanced picture from the media. We do not get the whole truth. We do not hear from them the phenomenal sales of the Bible, the amount of aid going from Christian churches to the war-stricken and hungry, the persecution of the church in Muslim countries or the amount of tax-payers money that funds the gay lobby.

The media can hardly even admit that Cliff Richard's "Millennium Prayer" is top of the charts even after they tried to boycott it. The public are subjected to editor's whims and fancies, ideals and values and the whole truth is not being freely spread by the media.

Psychology & Modern Thought

Postmodernist thought is to blame for a lot. Truth is no longer an absolute for many people and therefore, for them, little is very serious. Pontius Pilate's: *"What is truth?"* takes on a new dimension and is applied to just about anything. Modern psychology has taught us that what the Bible teaches about spiritual realities are really no more than our opinion and a viewpoint.

This perspective has ultimately led to an age that no longer treats religion as a serious life or death issue. While we are free to study it, it is no longer vital or urgent. We now listen to the psychologists instead of the Bible.

Work and Time

We all need to work. Work is necessary as well as a good therapy and reflects part of our being created in the image of God. However, in these days of mass unemployment, employers are extracting too much out of those working to the extent that many are threatened with the sack if they are not prepared to give up more hours of their family life and their Sundays.

The Lord's Day has certainly suffered at the hands of big business. Further, such is the pressure on business executives that Christians are largely unable to attend mid-week meetings of their churches. Ask any minister and he will tell you that there are a hundred legitimate reasons why their members cannot attend mid-week meetings due to the implications and pressures of modern day work.

Another symptom of pressurised employment is the obsession with "efficiency". Efficiency is not the same as effectiveness. Only God can make things effective. We are so busy, we have forgotten what it is all about. Even Christian ministers can be toiling away working and not getting the blessing, content that they are efficiently using their time. Being busy and being effective are

two different things. It is difficult to imagine Jesus, if he was living today, to be running around looking at his watch every two minutes. Our business environment and culture is teaching us to rush and get things done to the extent that we have confused efficiency for effectiveness.

Recreation and Relaxation

What do we do nowadays in our spare time? As a society we seldom sit and reflect on our lives. We are almost afraid to take things too seriously. We cannot sit in silence and meditate. Young people always seem to have their ears plugged with earphones listening to hi-fi. No new car would sell nowadays if it did not have a sophisticated radio/cassette/CD system.

We just don't seem to want quietness to reflect. As a generation, we have actually forgotten how to rest. Our holidays are causing us stress. Statistics record that one of the peak times for filing divorces is immediately after the summer holidays and after the Christmas break. Holidays are not always restful these days. Why can't people "rest" these days? Is it not because many people have no faith? It is impossible to rest without faith. We have lost our confidence, because we have lost faith in God. As a generation, we seem unable to sit back and relax.

The gospel is still powerful. It is still the only answer. However, we must be alert to the subtle ways in which this world erects barriers to the gospel.

The Assembly 2005

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Associated Presbyterian Churches met at Kingsview Christian Centre, Balnafettach Road, Inverness on Wednesday 11 MAY, 2005 at 7pm.

Public Worship was conducted by the retiring moderator Revd John Ross who preached most appropriately on the Great Commission from Mark 16:15 urging the church to 'Go into all the world' with renewed zeal and faith, after which, he constituted the Assembly with prayer and welcomed both delegates and the public to its meeting.

After confirming the legitimacy of appointing an elder as Moderator, the Assembly unanimously appointed Mr William Byers, Ruling Elder as its new Moderator and he was welcomed to the chair by the retiring Moderator, Revd John Ross.

The Loyal Address was read by Revd John Ross and was then adopted by the Assembly. This is a letter to our Queen expressing our prayerful good wishes for her sovereign rule over us.

The Assembly then heard from the various delegates from other like-minded denominations who were present.

The delegate from the Free Church, Revd Douglas MacKeddie brought greetings from his Church and then spoke from John 7:46

emphasising to us that the *way* we speak is as important as what we speak.

The Revd Andrew Quigley of the Scottish Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie in bringing greetings from his denomination challenged us to be hopeful for the future regardless of how small we might be and invited us to have closer ties together.

Revd David S Fraser brought greetings from the Free Church Continuing and spoke from 1 Cor 16:13 encouraging us to watch and stand fast in the faith and to plead for our nation.

Revd David Cross, the delegate of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England & Wales brought greetings and said how 1 Cor 3:6 and Acts 20:20 came very much to his mind when he thought of our denomination.

The Assembly then heard reports, first of all from our Canadian delegate, the newly licensed Revd Jerrold Lewis. He brought greetings from our brethren in Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, and expressed his encouragement at being with us.

The Revd John Ross, the retiring Moderator, gave a short report of the Scottish Presbytery's activities during 2004, listing the encouragements and discouragements.

The Revd M Douglas Campbell,

representing the Scottish Bible Society spoke of the work of the Society and presented the Moderator with two different copies of the Scriptures.

The Revd A Murray, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Highland Theological College spoke of its 10 years existence and the many difficulties that faced such a venture.

Mr William Mackenzie, challenged us by asking us when we prayed last for Christian publishers and gave 5 interesting vignettes of why we ought to read more.

Mr James Campbell addressed the Assembly on the work of the charity and touched many as he spoke of the worldwide needs that Blythswood were meeting.

The Assembly was closed with singing from Psalm 24 and the Benediction pronounced by Revd A Murray.

Licensing of Mr Jerrold Lewis

Earlier in the day the Presbytery had met and part of its business was to license our Canadian student to the work of the ministry.

A Report on his work as a student in the Church was read to the Presbytery from the Training of the Ministry Committee.

Mr Jerrold Lewis was asked to preach from Acts 4:12 which was given to him some time previously. He did so referring to the 'Name', the 'Giving', and the 'Salvation' spoken of in the text.

Mr Jerrold Lewis was examined by Mr R W M Mackenzie on Scripture and Mr William Byers on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Questions from the floor were invited and points of clarification were made.

The probationer was then asked to leave the Court while the Presbytery went into discussion.

The Presbytery expressed satisfaction with Mr Lewis' Trials and Revd M MacInnes moved and Revd A Murray seconded that his Trials be sustained and that the Presbytery should proceed to licensing Mr Lewis.

The Moderator put the Questions to be addressed to a Probationer on Licensing to Mr Lewis, all of which he answered in the affirmative.

The Moderator did then in the name and by the authority of the Presbytery solemnly License Mr Lewis to preach the Gospel within the bounds of the Presbytery, and wherever else his lot may be cast in God's Providence.

The Moderator then suitably addressed the Licentiate, reminding him of the trials and encouragements of the work and that it was all worth it even if only one soul was saved.

The Moderator having engaged in prayer, gave the right hand of fellowship to Mr Lewis and was followed in this by all members of Presbytery.

Mr Lewis then signed the Formula in the presence of the Presbytery.

From the Moderator's Desk

AT THE PRESBYTERY on 11 May 2005 the subject of appointing a ruling elder as Moderator of Assembly was raised informally.

A discussion ensued that I did not participate in as I took it to be purely academic. The next thing I knew was that I was nominated and unanimously elected as moderator!

I was bewildered, I just could not take it in, I thought that there must be some mistake, but no. I was assured that I would be expected to take the chair at the later meeting of the General Assembly.

In doing so I knew that I was following in the footsteps of Brownlow North in The Free Church of Scotland, and John Erskine of Dun in the 16th century reformation Church of Scotland.

I feel totally unworthy and humbled by this honour, and by the confidence that the Fathers and Brethren of the APC expressed in me in this regard and in thanking them for it, I seek grace to "magnify mine office".

I often felt that in the past we did not keep the person in the pew as well informed as we should about what was being done in the Church. So this is to let you know what I have been doing since being appointed Moderator of Assembly.

In the past I have had the privilege of occupying the Assistant Clerk's chair for some time and the Clerk's chair for a short time. I never even dreamed of occupying the Moderator's chair. Our blessed Saviour said, "*I am among you as he that serveth.*" [Luke 22:27]. There is a gospel song which says "I'll wish I had given Him more".

After the meeting of Assembly one of the first duties that devolved upon me was to go as APC delegate to the Free Church General Assembly and the Free Church Continuing General Assembly in Edinburgh. That was quite an interesting experience.

I was received with respect, courtesy and brotherly love and I met up with many minister's and elders that were friends of long standing, some of which I had not met or spoken to for many years. I met in both Assemblies a goodly number who had shown particular help to us in our early days after our inception in 1989 and was able to assure them publicly that their help and support at that time was much appreciated and would not be forgotten by us.

The Lord has been mindful of us in the interval. We have been I believe an instrument in His hands

to bring about a greater understanding between the various evangelical denominations in the land, at the same time retaining our separate identity.

We were greatly encouraged and rejoiced to be able to license Mr Jerrold Lewis the divinity student from Canada, to preach the gospel, at the Scottish Presbytery in May. Since returning home to Canada Mr Lewis has received a call from the Vancouver congregation and his induction is appointed to take place in the near future, DV.

This means that the Canadian Presbytery will have a quorum (two ministers with ruling elders) without deputies having to go out from Scotland which is a big stride forward for the church there.

The other minister in Canada is of course Revd Malcolm MacLeod recently inducted to the Toronto congregation. We wish them well in Canada and pray the Lord's richest blessing upon the church there.

As an assessor elder for the Dundee congregation I rejoiced to be present with them there when two elders were inducted and ordained on 12 June 2005. Again this has given them a quorum for Kirk Session meetings without the need for assessor elders to be present and is a big step forward. We have been praying for this for 16 years and The Lord has now graciously granted our petitions. Again I just refer to this matter as I have no doubt that it will

be more fully reported elsewhere in this issue.

We have a wonderful privilege as Scottish Presbyterians to assist smaller congregations in this way, and I feel that we don't always appreciate it as we ought. I am Presbyterian by birth but also by conviction.

There is no system of Church government perfect, but presbyterianism is democratic, not church government by one, but by all. Presbyters are equals. They do appoint a moderator for order but he only holds office for one year and then hands over to another appointed by the court.

The church is not ours but Christ's. He has said, *"I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* [Mat 16:18].

The old testament church knew this as it is stated in Psalm 46,

God in the midst of her doth dwell;
nothing shall her remove:
The Lord to her an helper will,
and that right early prove.

[Ps 46.5. Metrical]

Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him, Paul said *"I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me"*.

We are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. We are with prayer and thanksgiving to make out requests known unto God.

Brethren pray for us.

"A solitary Christian is worse than a contradiction, he is an anomaly, standing out against the express institution of God" - *James Bannerman*

Congregational News

DUNDEE

Since our last APC News the congregation has had two new elders ordained. Both men, Kevin Stirling and Iain Murray, live in Dundee which means we can have our 'own' local Kirk Session without depending on assessors coming from other parts of the country.

We wish to thank the Presbytery for their help in supplying us with the necessary and willing members to make up the quorum required. Please pray that Kevin and Iain will be blessed in their new roles in the congregation. Pray that we will have a vision from the Lord for the future of the congregation which will bring glory to His name.

It was nice having many friends from all areas of Scotland, and from other denominations join us at the ordination service and our assessor elder William Byers from Hilton in Fearn, Ross-shire. A communion service was held at the evening service. Our minister took all the services that day and the congregation provided their usual excellent lunch in the church.

Before the summer ends we hope to have a Special Service at John Knox's Pulpit in the Glenlomond hills. This is a vale, near Kinnesswood, Kinross, called the

Covenanters Glen. The Reformers preached there during times of persecution. It has a 'pulpit' type rock from which Knox himself preached, and which has its own natural 'sounding board' making the voice clear and audible. We hope friends from the community will join us and that the minister will make the occasion memorable with a good gospel sermon!

Andy, our part-time worker hopes to run the Holiday Club for the young children in the community from Tuesday to Thursday 9th to 11th August. After that there will be the Weekend Away when all the children and hopefully many parents will join us at the Boy Scouts Camp at Tannadice, some miles away near Forfar. This weekend finishes with an appropriate sermon in the Church.

Some parents of members in the congregation are ill and we ask for prayer for them. The mothers of Iain and Sine are very unwell and need to be remembered in prayer.

HARRIS

Please pray for this congregation as there are have been several people, both old and young, who have been taken to hospital recently and the

congregation has been somewhat depleted as a result.

STORNOWAY

The congregation enjoyed having Revd Jerrold Lewis at its May Communion. They also had a Congregational 'Get-Together' to help TEARFUND in its 'Make Poverty History Campaign'. Ann Maclean, a member in the congregation spoke and showed slides of her recent visit to Cambodia. This challenged us all regarding our Christian concern for the poor and the spread of the gospel. The congregation hope to have its Annual Barbecue on Friday 29 July.

INVERNESS

The Highland Preaching Conference was held on Saturday 4 June at Kingsview, with guests speakers Art Azurdia and David Meredith. The theme for the day was the work of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of preaching. Both speakers presented instructive and challenging messages, and these are available on audio tape to anyone who is interested. The subject is one well worth studying.

That was a one-day conference on a Saturday so the congregation had the benefit of Art Azurdia's ministry at the forenoon service next day. On the evening of that day, we had the ministry of Derick Bingham.

He was visiting the town as guest speaker for the Gospel Male Voice Choir Festival, and we had the privilege of his fellowship for that service.

The congregation had the Lord's Supper over the last Lord's Day in June, and again we had the benefit of some visiting preachers, Grant Bell, Alastair MacDonald, and Berry Driver. All three visitors delivered good biblical teaching and their preaching was much appreciated by the congregation. The original preaching schedule had not included Berry. We did not know he was coming to Inverness when the plans were made. he worshipped with us on the Lord's Day, and was there for the Monday evening service. The preacher who was to be with us that evening was seriously delayed in getting to Kingsview, by which time the service was well in progress, and Berry had stepped in to address the congregation at remarkably short notice.

He preached a very instructive and encouraging sermon. We believe that the Lord, who is the God of providence, had a purpose in the events of the evening, and we stand in adoration as His purposes unfold. The congregation was encouraged also by the addition of two new male members, for which we thank the Lord.

The congregation hopes to run a Children's Club over the last week of the summer school holidays, and we ask that you pray for the blessing of the God of Heaven on these young lives.

Wind, Earthquake, and Fire

By Jerrold H. Lewis

WHILE ON A RECENT trip in Scotland, I was deeply struck by the words of one of our Highland ministers who said, "I rarely pray for revival". After gathering my chin from my lap, I asked him why not.

He began to tell me how profoundly difficult it is to minister to a people who, because of past awakenings in their history, think the *only way* one can know if the Lord has truly done a work in the heart, is to have a sudden, powerful, dramatic, and effectual move of the Holy Spirit upon the soul in revival. Anything short of this is met, not with hostility, but with suspicion and doubt.

Now don't get me wrong, this dear brother was *not* saying we should stop praying for revival. What he was saying however was that he longed for the slow, steady, regular, and even mundane (I use that word respectfully) ways in which Christ normally grows his Church.

His point stuck with me the whole trip, and I was left asking myself this question several times since, "Has my desire to see revival spoiled me for the regular work of the Church?" I was reminded that God has often used the everyday, the regular and the mundane to convey His sovereignty and magnificence. This He did with Elijah on Mount

Horeb.

In 1 Kings 19, Elijah, who had just witnessed one of the truly great miracles of the Old Testament was commanded by the Lord to go and wait for Him at "*Horeb the mount of God*" [19:9].

Verses 11-12 tell us,
"And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice"

The Wind

The wind had been the tool of the Lord before, so why not now in Elijah's case? We are no doubt reminded of the words found in Job 38:1, "*Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*"

God used the wind to judge Egypt and Babylon [Exo 10:13; Jer 51:1], part the Red Sea [Exo 14:21], provide nourishment [Num 11:31], revive His covenant [Eze 37:9], send his Spirit [Act 2:2], and judge the world [Rev 7:1]. Why not here in this text? Might this be the way in which the Lord decided to speak to Elijah on the mountain? What was Elijah

thinking as the wind tore the rocks before him? Judgment on Jezebel [1 Ki 18]? Indignation on the idolaters [18:40]? Revival for the 7000 who had not bowed their knee to Baal [1 Kin 19:18]? But here, *"the Lord was not in the wind."*

The Earthquake

Next we see that a great earthquake shook the place where the prophet stood. This same mountain had trembled before. In the days of Moses, *"Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."* The awe an earthquake inspires can make the strongest man weak. Was Jehovah about to shake the nations?

This mighty shaking has been attributed to Jehovah's presence [Jdg 5:4], His Judgment [Isa 29:6], His salvation [Mat 28:2], and the end of the age [Mat 24:7]. It is also widely known that such physical signs and premonitory upheavals would accompany the closing conflict between the powers of light and darkness [Isa 24:20; Zec 14:4; Mat 24:7]. What powerful works could the Lord do with His mighty shaking? What kingdoms would fall, what rulers tremble? Was Elijah looking for the Lord in the shaking of His Judgment at this time? No for, *"the Lord was not in the earthquake."*

The Fire

After the wind and the earthquake,

Elijah is confronted once again with fire from heaven. No doubt Elijah was reminded of his recent victory over the false prophets of Baal [1 Kings 18]. Was the Lord coming now, not to consume a bullock, but His enemies [Psalm 37:20]? Was he coming to purifying Elijah by testing and proving [Mal 3:2]? Perhaps He was sending Elijah zeal as a result of the filling by the Spirit akin to the believers at Pentecost [Acts 2; Isa 4:4]? Was this fire to refine? To test? To judge? To cleanse? None of these, for *"the Lord was not in the fire."*

The Still Small Voice

After a raging wind, a mighty earthquake, and fire from heaven, there is then silence in the ear of Elijah. And somewhere in the recesses of his soul he hears what the translators of the AV call, *"a still small voice"*. What does "a still small voice" mean? Literally it means, "a sound of soft stillness." John Gill says, *"not rough, but gentle, more like whispering than roaring; something soft, easy, and musical."* This is how the Lord spoke to Elijah. Why this way? Why not in the mighty deeds of God's awesome power? I think in part to remind His tired prophet, that God works just as efficiently through the seemingly unimpressive as he does through the spectacular.

Though wind, earthquake, and fire shook the mountain, it was the *"still small voice"* that made Elijah cover his face (a sign of holy reverence). It was the still small voice of God that gripped Elijah with

the majesty of God's holiness.

So often we are looking for God in the wind, earthquake, and fire of life, we forget that he still speaks to us in "*gentle whispers*." Much like Job who said, "*It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying*" [Job 4:16].

How often in life are we as believers looking for God in the mighty, the powerful, and the incredible? In revivals and awakenings, scouring the earth for the next wave of God's power to be felt. We live in a generation that is enamoured with the elaborate and immense, that discards the small and seemingly insignificant.

Was Elijah so accustomed to God moving in a majestic display of power (after fire from heaven), that he needed to be reminded that although Jehovah was a God of the *wind, earthquake and fire*, he was also the God of the ordinary? Perhaps. Are we not like Elijah here?

Is it possible that at times, we are so transfixed by the echoes of the past, and looking so hard for God in the phenomenal that we miss His still small voice? We feel like Elijah at times, wanting to crawl under a Juniper and call it quits. But remember, it is "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts*" [Zec 4:6].

While we do not hear the audible voice of God any longer, we still hear His gentle whispers in His providence: in our Lord's Day services (the preaching, reading, and

singing of His Word), in the Lord's Supper, baptism, mid week meetings, Bible studies, prayer meetings, session meetings, deacons courts, presbyteries, family worship, private devotions, conferences, and retreats.

No, it is not all the drama and excitement of a *Cambuslang Revival*, but it is His *usual way*. If we would just be still and know that He is God [Psa 46:10].

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "I pray daily for revival", but never saw it. Truth be known, God does not normally send revival, but he does speak to us *directly* every time in His Word (if we are listening). It is the still small voice of His Spirit in the text. Are you listening? Are you placing yourself in a closet (as it were), daily, to seek out the still small voice of God? Do you take the Psalmist's instruction "*Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still*" [Psa 4:4]?

Conclusion

God does still move dramatically at times within the Church, so we will continue to pray for revival in Canada (something *we* have never seen). But until revival comes, we need to labour as if it never will, and remember to listen to the still small voice in the normal routine of His providence. "*Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you*" [Hosea 10:12].

What Are You Living For?

IN THE 1920's THE WORLD'S MOST successful men met in the Edgewater Hotel in Chicago. There was present the presidents of America's largest steel company, utility company and gas company; also the presidents of the New York Stock Exchange and the Bank of International Settlements. Together these were the faces of power and success. The ones we all want to be like!

But twenty-five years later, the story was so different. The president of America's greatest utility company, Samuel Insull, had died penniless in a foreign country as a fugitive from justice. The president of the largest independent steel company, Charles Schwab, had lived his last years on borrowed money and died bankrupt. The president of the largest gas company Howard Hobson, went totally insane and the president of the New York Stock Exchange, Richard Whitney, was released from Alcatraz to go home and die.

Finally, the president of the Bank of International Settlements, Leon Fraser, committed suicide. Everyone of these men knew how to make a living - but none of them knew how to live.

Jesus told us, life is not built on things, it's built on relationships, and the first relationship we need is with God. Jesus was right when He said "*A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses*" [Luke 13:15] and "*What will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" [Mark 8:37].

What Are You Praying For?

A CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE RECENTLY published the following prayer, made in 1927, by the Rt Hon John Ward:

'O Lord, Thou knowest that I have nine houses in the city of London, and I have lately purchased an estate in Essex. I beseech Thee to preserve the two counties of Middlesex and Essex from fires and earthquakes. And, as I also have a mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg Thee also to have an eye on that county, and for the rest of the counties Thou mayest deal with them as Thou art pleased".

We may find the above prayer amusing or unbelievable, but how 'worldly' are your prayers? Is your prayer list filled with petitions for

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Editor has received two booklets regarding 'The Purpose Driven Life' and 'The Purpose Driven Church' but has either misplaced any note of the sender's address, or there was no note indicating who it was from. He is therefore unable to reply. He would point out that we welcome comments, positive or negative, about the contents of the APC News. He would remind readers that it is editorial policy not to malign any person, but criticism of errors in doctrine and teachings printed are of course encouraged provided, they are done in a logical and gracious manner. We trust that all that is printed in the APC News is good teaching, whatever the theological position of the original writer may be. We hold that God uses all kinds of sources - Paul quoted from 3 different heathen authors in Scripture, and an ass was used to correct a prophet. All truth is God's truth. We make no apology for quoting from any person or source provided the teaching in it is good.

NEWS RELEASE -

WEST of SCOTLAND BIBLE SOCIETY

For 150 years the society has offered the Scriptures to churches as discounted rates. Since its formation nearly half a million Bibles have been distributed and last year 39 churches took advantage of this facility. Its aim continues to be to promote the wider circulation of the Scriptures, chiefly, But by no means exclusively, in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Churches wishing to purchase Bibles, which can be in all versions and formats including CD Rom, for baptisms, weddings presentations, Sunday School and other organisation prizes or for personal use are asked to make a donation to the Society of approximately half their retail value, thus representing a considerable saving.

Following the retirement of the Rev Alexander MacDonald of Neilton, the Rev Finlay MacKenzie has assumed the post of Secretary. Requests for Bibles should be addressed to him at 51 Rowallan Gardens, Glasgow, G11 7LH, tel 0141 563 5276. Email f.c.mack51@ntlworld.com

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