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# The APC News

The Magazine of the Associated Presbyterian Churches in Scotland



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## JUSTIFICATION

A Conference was held in Edinburgh in August on the great subject of justification. The picture above shows some of the speakers who gave papers at it.

From left to right: David Searle, (Warden of Rutherford House who hosted the meeting and retired at the end of the conference), Carl Trueman, N T Wright, (the new Bishop of Durham), Simon Gathercole and Bruce MacCormack.

A report of the conference is given inside on page 22.

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# Adding to our Faith

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**W**HEN PETER CALLED upon his readers to add to their faith he was concerned about their spirituality. He says that there were some among them for whom it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness at all, than to have known it and then turn from it [2 Peter 2:21].

Peter finishes that letter with a warning *"beware, lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked"* [2 Peter 3:17].

In the New Testament Church many of those who professed faith 'went off the rails'. The great Apostle Paul had this experience *"all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes"* [2 Tim 1:15]. He had to remind the Philippians *"that many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ"* [Phil 3:18].

The Apostle John writes about those following our Lord *"many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him"* [John 6:66]. In all ages, disciples have turned away from the truth.

The remedy to avoid this happening to us today, the Apostle Peter says, is to add to our faith. If

we do this we will never fall. That is why Peter advises *"be even more diligent to make your call and election sure"* [2 Peter 1:10].

We need to realise that coming to faith in Christ is at the start of our spiritual journey, not the end of it. It is sad to see and hear of so many Christians content with the conviction that their eternal destiny is secure, but not seeking further progress in godliness. The desire to add to their faith and glorify God is not high on their agenda. This state is dangerous. The devil is the arch opportunist and roams about seeking out the vulnerable to bring them down.

Like a newly planted tree, the Christian must grow - in grace and knowledge. Peter outlines those graces that we need to add to our faith. We of course will need to 'work' at adding to our faith. It requires discipline and effort. Paul believes this for he talks of *"the work of faith"* to the Thessalonians [1 Thes 1:3, 2 Thes 1:11], and to the Philippians *"work out their own salvation"* [Phil 2:12]. It is we who are to add to our faith, not God.

What are we to add to our faith? First of all, *"virtue"* or 'goodness'. It is that quality which one Greek scholar says 'that makes a man a good citizen and friend'. It is a

quality that all can recognise. The world and the church can see it and love it. It has the element of courage and effect. We need to be more courageous in our faith so that we affect people's lives.

Then we are also to add knowledge to our faith. Peter emphasises this often *"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"* [2 Pet 3: 18]. Enthusiasts have little difficulty in reading up and gaining more knowledge about their pursuit. So Christians should be eager to learn more about their Lord and the salvation that cost Him so much. It is a sad thing indeed if Christians do not want to grow in knowledge.

Self-control is another grace that Peter exhorts us to obtain. This is a much needed grace in the Christian sector. Sadly too many Christians can lose their temper, sulk, be easily offended, and have a wrong attitude and spirit towards their brothers and sisters. Solomon tells us that *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city"* [Pro 16:32].

Perseverance in the midst of difficulties is also required if we are to grow in our faith. Too many people give up easily and do not persevere in a good work. It is said that 80% of failures is due to people giving up - failing to continue. Perseverance is not a passive philosophical art of simply 'waiting' for things to get better. It is a positive active enjoying of the experience of trusting God's

promises that all things work together for good. As James says it is considering it pure joy to be privileged to face trials [Jam 1:2].

The next grace is Godliness. The root meaning is looking in both directions, towards God and towards man. It is having a Godlike attitude towards our fellow creatures. It is the acknowledging of our duty to God and to man.

Brotherly-kindness refers to our relationship within our family. It refers to our behaviour in the domestic realm. How many Christians fail here? A man is only as good as he is in his home. Peter would have us live at peace with our families. If we find our obligations to our family a nuisance, then there is something wrong with our religion. C S Lewis said he found it easier to pray for his wife than to help her with the dishes. A man who plops himself down on the sofa in front of the TV and leaves his wife to slave away in the kitchen is not a man that has this grace in exercise.

Finally, Peter mentions love (agape love). This is distinct from infatuation and from the Hollywood style of love. It is loving the undeserving and the unloveable. It is the kind of love that God and His Son used when they chose sinners like you and me. It was when we were still in our sins that God loved us. *"God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* [Rom 5:8].

These are the things you and I have to 'work at'.

# Apathetic About Truth

By Jill Carattini

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**A**N AQUAINTANCE OF mine recently voiced a deep frustration. He was troubled by the disinterest of his friends when it came to entertaining thoughts of God. He explained that his friends had no particular complaint against God, but also no interest whatsoever. "I cannot understand," he said, "the mind that has no need to know if God exists, what it means if Christ really is who He says He is, or whether any of it is even true or not true in the first place."

Herein lies the heart of his complaint. The greatest pursuit in life should be for what is true. It is upsetting, indeed staggering, to see so many give up the quest of truth for a lesser pursuit. Blaise Pascal and C.S. Lewis agreed. Pascal, like my acquaintance, was deeply frustrated by the human tendency to flat out avoid the truth, especially when it challenges our will or sense of comfort.

Lewis, who was bothered by the human propensity to avoid thinking altogether, pointed to the fundamental difference between humans and animals. What makes a man human is his desire to know things, to ask, to examine, and to understand. When a person loses this desire, it is as if he has become something less than human.

Indeed, there comes a certain responsibility to being human. There are great and far-reaching questions we all must answer, questions we can wholly choose to ignore, but in so doing we must realize that even "not answering" is still in a very real sense an answer.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus makes a pointed statement. He says, "If you are not for me, you are against me." [Matthew 12:30] For many, his words are hard to take in. We prefer not to think in such stark terms. Whereas during election time or at a sporting event we may be conscious of certain dividing lines, for the most part we do not think about who is on what side. In fact, we are largely indifferent to the majority of individuals passing by us each day.

And yet, anyone who has ever suffered from any kind of racial or religious oppression is painfully aware of the truth that is spoken in Christ's words: Those who stand apathetically in the background of persecution, persecute by passivity. If you are not for me, you are against me—a non-answer very clearly becomes an answer. So it is with Christ.

In fact, someone once told me that the opposite of Christ-likeness is not sinfulness like we might expect, but apathy. The idea is that

the sinner is actually closer to the heart of Christ than the apathetic person. And I think this is verified throughout the Gospel.

In fact, Zacchaeus comes to mind. Having climbed a tree so as to catch a glimpse of the One he heard was coming, the morally bankrupt, commercially prosperous tax collector came down from that tree at Christ's invitation, and his life took a dramatic turn. Called by name, Zacchaeus saw not only the life of Christ, but also the life that was to be found in Christ, to be in immeasurable contrast to his own. And what he saw compelled him to follow.

In contrast, the apathetic stance of Pontius Pilate led him to ask flippantly, "*What is truth?*" as he ironically looked Truth Incarnate in

the eyes. He saw nothing because he sought nothing. Seeking nothing out of fear or guilt or pride, the apathetic person becomes indifferent to life, such that truth becomes unrecognizable.

Is the greatest pursuit in your life to seek after what is true? Jesus has asked, "*Who do you say I am?*" [Matthew 16:15] Have you been apathetic about life?

Christ invites, "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" [Matthew 11:29] Indeed, He calls you by name. How will you answer?

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07/30/03 Apathetic About Truth

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## Time With the Family!

**C**HARLES FRANCIS ADAMS was the United States ambassador to Great Britain during the Lincoln administration. He had the habit of keeping a daily diary. He also taught his son, Brooks, the value of journaling his activities in a diary.

One memorable day, eight-year-old Brooks recorded, "Went fishing with my father, the most glorious day of my life." It must have been, for the next forty years Brooks repeatedly mentioned it in his diary.

His father also wrote about the fishing trip. His own diary on that pivotal day for his son reads, "Went fishing with my son; a day wasted."

Did he ever know that a single day spent with Brooks may have been the most well spent day of his life? He may have felt that, as a United States ambassador, his time was extremely valuable. But history seems to show that some individual time spent with his son may have turned out to be one of his most valuable investments. Which raises the question: is there an important way you can spend some time today?

*Taken from 'Preaching Now' Web Site*

# A God Whom I May Call Father

This personal testimony is reprinted with permission from the September/October issue of 'Barnabas'

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"EDWARD" LOST HIS family, his home, his inheritance and more when he became a Christian. This is typical of what happens to Muslims who choose to follow Christ in any Islamic context.

Living in Sudan, a country where the law specifies the death penalty for apostates from Islam, Edward might easily have lost his life as well. Thankfully the Lord enabled him to leave Sudan, and he now lives in Europe, where he is involved in Christian ministry. The following is an abridged version of his testimony.

I grew up in predominantly Muslim North Sudan. My parents belonged to a radical organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood, so they brought me up as a strict Muslim. From the age of 10 to the age of 13, I attended the Khalwa, a boarding school where the Qu'ran is learned by rote. At the graduation ceremony the whole student body recited the entire Qur'an in one night. Thus I was firmly convinced that Islam was the only way to God and that

Muhammad was the final and therefore most authoritative prophet.

I considered myself to be a good person because I had memorized the Qur'an and had done many good deeds. Being an observant Muslim, I also believed in Jesus, though only as one of the many prophets whom God had sent to mankind. I believed all Christians would go to hell, and that the Bible was falsified.

Then something happened which caused my well-ordered world to fall apart. When I was 18 my uncle, who was an imam (prayer leader and preacher in a mosque), suddenly became a Christian. Jesus was for him no longer just a prophet but also the Son of God. This angered my whole family, who caused him to be jailed for five years, and took his wife, children, and all his possessions away from him. In doing this, they hoped to force him to return to Islam.

I too was angry and tried to talk with him and help him to find his way back to Islam. Therefore I

decided to find out more about the Christian faith so as to be able to refute my uncle's arguments. I had no Bible, so I began studying what the Qur'an says about Jesus. I was very surprised to find a verse saying that Jesus was with God and that he was still alive. A "voice" inside me challenged me to decide whether I wanted to follow this living Jesus. I began to wonder about when and why the Bible had been falsified, but I could find no answer to my questions. I cried out to God to show Himself to me.

One evening during this time of inner searching I met a Christian who told me about God's relationship with Adam and Eve which was destroyed by a sin. This opened my eyes to the holiness of God, and that only one sin is enough to be separated from God. He then spoke of the love of God and His forgiveness, that Jesus was "the way, the truth, and the life", and spoke personally to people. The longing arose in me to get to know this God better and to follow Him.

The way to salvation seemed too simple. It was hard to grasp that I was redeemed by grace alone and that I did not have to do anything myself to earn it. On the other hand) I thought about my uncle and all the difficulties he had encountered when he decided to follow Jesus. Would the same thing happen to me? But God touched my heart and gave me the courage to make a decision that very evening.

This decision for a life with Jesus changed my life totally. My

mother soon noticed a difference in me, especially because I kept defending my uncle. She asked me if I too had become a Christian, and soon my whole family knew. My grandfather put pressure on my father to bring me back to Islam because it brought shame on our family that two members had now been "lost".

They decided not to have me arrested, but I still had to leave my parents' house immediately and sign a statement renouncing all claims I had as the eldest and only son to any kind of inheritance. I also had to drop out of university because, as a convert to Christianity, I no longer had any right to study there. My friends shunned me. It was very difficult for me to live without family in a society where the family is of the utmost importance, and I had to learn to trust God totally. It was then, and is still, a great comfort to me to know that, though I no longer had an earthly family, I belong now to a much greater family and to a God whom I may call Father.

*"Edward"*

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# SOS

## Special Outreach Services

**The APC Presbytery encourages all congregations to do evangelistic outreach.**

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**A**ROUND 91.5% of the people in the UK do not align themselves with a church where the gospel is preached.

Drunkenness is at an all time high throughout the land. Sexually transmitted diseases are taking more and more of NHS resources. Fewer and fewer couples are choosing to marry before living together. Divorce rates are very high. Church attendance is very low. Astrology is very popular. Evolution is the accepted "wisdom" for many. Non Christian religions abound.

Satan certainly wants us to retreat and sadly some cave in as ungodliness becomes ever more strident. But it is not the time to retreat, it is the time to go out with the gospel. Our communities and the whole nation need the gospel more than ever.

It is therefore very encouraging that, last May the Presbytery agreed that each congregation should do some evangelistic outreach during **the week beginning Monday 20th October**. A congregational meal was suggested but each congregation is free to try something else if it is thought more appropriate

and at a different time if that is more convenient.

The point of this short article is to briefly highlight the need and the reasons for evangelism; to acknowledge some of the difficulties and to encourage us to evangelise.

The information in the table is taken from 'Operation World' by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk. 6th Edition 2001, Published by Paternoster Lifestyle" (A most rewarding book to read.) The percentages (which include adherents and their children) are of **the official population who align themselves with churches where the gospel is preached.**

The percentage of converted people is only known to God. The percentage who regularly attend an evangelical church would be very much lower.

USA	32.5%
Faeroe Islands	28.5%
Zimbabwe	25.3%
New Zealand	22.1%
South Africa	19.3%
South Korea	15.5%
Brazil	12.6%
Australia	12.5%
Argentina	10.8%

Canada	10.8%
Norway	9.3%
Peru	8.7%
<u>UK</u>	<u>8.5%</u>
Romania	6.3%
China	6.0%
Denmark	4.8%
Netherlands	4.5%
Germany	2.9%
Italy	0.9%
Iraq	0.1%

A glance at the table shows how far down the UK is, and in comparison with countries that we might have thought were weaker than us. 8.5% are at least nominally Evangelical. That means that 91.5% are choosing not to listen to the gospel or identify with it. This is by any standard a massive rejection of Christ.

How many of us were once the same? Thankfully there were those who cared enough to pray for us and to get through to us. The least we can do is try to get through to some of that 91.5%. We have a huge proportion of the population to work on. If this doesn't move us we need to stay in prayer until it does. Such a low percentage of Evangelicals in the land is a very loud wake up call.

Christ said of Jerusalem, ".....  
..... *how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.*" [Mat23:37]. The more we have the spirit of Christ then the more we long to see people saved.

Here are some more reasons for evangelising.

The words of scripture: "...*do the work of an evangelist*" [2 Tim 4:5]; "...*preach the gospel to every creature*" [Mark 16:15]; . "...*how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*" [Rom 10:14]; "...*there is no other name under heaven given to men, by which we must be saved*" [Acts 4:12]; "... *joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents*" [Luke 15:7].

It would cast doubt on our claim to be a true part of the Christian Church if we were not going out with the gospel.

People need the gospel for the present life. As the gospel spreads social problems decrease - Drunkenness, laziness, brutality, sexual immorality and perversion, divorce, injustice, dishonesty, greed, selfishness, lawlessness, etc etc.

Jealousy for the honour and glory of God.

The utter inadequacy of every other religion to meet man's greatest need.

The less we go out with the gospel, the more outsiders think we have nothing to offer.

We believe in the free offer of the gospel. What an indictment if we do not offer it.

Scotland is a mission field.

Those who have been reached and saved are so thankful.

We have the Truth. We are obliged to share it. We want to share it. Only the Gospel brings about the

change needed if an individual is to be saved. One soul is worth more than the whole world.

Love to God and love and compassion to our neighbour.

Outreach must be viewed as something simple and straight-forward not as something that only a select few can do. With due thought and prayer even the weakest believer can say an appropriate word. Telling the truth about Jesus with the help that comes from God and to the best of our ability is our "stock in trade" and ultimately that is the essence of evangelistic outreach. We fall into Satan's trap when we think we can do nothing to meet today's need. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

We all find it difficult to go out with the gospel as often and as regularly as we should. No surprise! Satan hates any attempt to pull down his strongholds. Many of us are overstretched as it is. Therefore it hinges on what priority do we give to evangelism. The vital importance of reaching out with the gospel is demonstrated by the fact that, none of us would be saved if the gospel had not been communicated to us. It is as those who are battling with the same difficulties, fears and problems

that we face this all important task of reaching out. *"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap"* [Eccl 4:11]. Whatever we do, we must cry to God to grant the power of the Holy Spirit in us and through us.

Remember when Ben-Hadad besieged Samaria until the famine was so acute that there was a case of cannibalism. Then four lepers discovered that Ben-Hadad's army had fled and left a mountain of food and treasure. The lepers helped themselves and were continuing to feast and plunder till they remembered their perishing fellow Samaritans. Then the lepers said to each other, *"We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves.....Let's go at once and report it...."* How much more, if we are keeping the gospel to ourselves, should we say, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves.....Let's go at once and report it...."

May God enable me and everyone who reads this, to go and tell the good news.

*John Ross*

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STANDING ON A LONDON street corner, G K Chesterton was once approached by a newspaper reporter who inquired, "Sir, I understand that you recently became a Christian. May I ask you one question?" "Certainly," replied Chesterton. "If the risen Christ suddenly appeared at this very moment and stood behind you, what would you do?" Chesterton looked the reporter squarely in the eye and said, "He is."

# Congregational News

## DUNDEE

We have started a 'Drop-in' prayer time on Tuesday evenings from 5.30pm to 6.30pm in the manse. This gives an opportunity to people in the congregation to stop over and have a short time of prayer on the way home from work. No one is obliged to stay for the whole hour and anyone can come for as short a time as available to them to spend some time in prayer.

The congregation have enjoyed having Regi and her 2 children worship with them for the past six weeks. Regi is from India and her husband is studying at the University and lives near the church. We trust that she will be blessed as she comes to the services. Please pray for her and her family.

The minister attended a Mission to the World Meeting in Dundee recently where he was introduced to elders from American reformed Churches who wish to have a relationship with Scottish reformed churches. Many of these churches would like to have partnership arrangements where there would be reciprocal help in the area of prayer and mission.

During the week of Evangelism which the APC are having in October the congregation hope to have Jimmie Gunn from Brora come again

for an evening of fellowship and testimony. We are hoping that many in the community will come along as they did last year. On the Sunday we hope to finish the week with a harvest Thanksgiving Service where again we trust the community will come along.

## STORNOWAY

September was a busy month for the congregation. On 04 September the congregation was pleased to hear (and see) how Sandy Gillies was able to raise over £4,000 for Mission Aviation Fellowship, by climbing Mount Killimanjaro in Tanzania. He showed colour pictures of his expedition along with a short talk relating the work of MAF to the Bible.

On Thursday 11 September, the congregation decided it should proceed with a "Christianity Explored" course throughout the winter months, commencing on Wednesday 22 October, in line with the APC Presbytery's call for a week in October to be given over to "outreach" of some kind. The congregation craves the prayers of the church that many will respond and come to the church and hear the gospel.

On 18 September, the congregation had a joint-venture

with St Columba's Church to hear William Mackenzie of CFP give a talk on the promotion of Christian literature.

In addition, several missionaries addressed the congregation on their work worldwide, throughout the month.

## **HARRIS**

The congregation were saddened by the sudden death of Donald Morrison, who sometimes led the

praise in the congregation, on 03 September. Donald lovingly cared for his sister Maggie over the last few years and will be sorely missed.

The congregation's elder, Sam Morrison, has been very ill in hospital and several others belonging to the congregation are also ill, so please do remember them in prayer.

The congregation was encouraged over the Communion with the preaching of Revd A N McPhail from Oban.

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## **New book details attacks on Christianity**

In Persecution (Regnery Publishing), author and attorney David Limbaugh tells a remarkable story of growing civic intolerance for Christian beliefs and symbols. If all you've heard about such persecution is the occasional story in your local newspaper, you'll be astounded at the litany of anti-Christian actions by public and school officials that Limbaugh relates here.

For example, two sisters at Lynn Lucas Middle School in the Houston area were carrying their Bibles into their classrooms when they were stopped by their teacher, who took them immediately to the principal's office, called the girls' mother, and threatened to call child protective services. "When the mother arrived, the teacher waved the Bibles at her and exclaimed, 'This is garbage,' then threw them into the trash can. She said the girls could not bring Bibles to school.

"In a separate but similar incident at the same school, officials confronted three students whose books had the Ten Commandments displayed on the covers. They threw the covers in the garbage, claiming the Ten Commandments were hate speech that might offend other students."

Limbaugh also discusses the increasing effort to eliminate references to Christianity from civic life. "In Covington, Georgia, the ACLU filed suit against a public school district because its calendar designated December 25 as Christmas, which is unconstitutionally 'advancing religion,' as opposed to just recognizing the commonly known fact . . . The City Council of Little Rock, Arkansas, changed the name of its annual December parade from the 'Christmas Parade' to the 'Holiday Parade' in order not to offend non-religious people or those of other faiths. As one writer quipped, 'I can't wait until they find out the word 'holiday' actually means 'holy day.' What to do then?'"

*[Taken from Preaching Now's Website]*

# Building on God's Master Plan

*"prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers"* [James 1:22]

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**I** USED TO BE A builder. Honest! When I worked with my father and brother building a house, we used to use a plan of the building. On the plan it had all the measurements on it that we needed to build the foundations right up to putting the roof on.

When we were putting windows in the house, we would look at the plan, mark them and build round the openings. The plans were fundamental to the building process. It should be no different for us as we build our families, our homes, and our lives. Our amazing God has given us a blueprint—His Word. We need to focus constantly on the blueprint for the building of our lives.

## **Following Directions**

That's the truth of Matthew 7:24-27: *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone, who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the*

*floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."*

## **Two Kinds of Houses**

Let's look at this passage a little more closely. Notice that there are two kinds of houses. Do you see that? First, there's the house built on the sand. This house was really easy to finish. It didn't require a lot of effort or work—a slapped together house, a place to sit in the back, grab a cup of tea and watch the crazy guy next door digging a foundation.

Building the house on the sand was a very easy thing to do. Low cost and the quality of the job would have been poor. How different from the house built on the rock! The house built on the rock took a lot of work. There were many weeks of digging and drilling and pouring before anything was even visible. The guy was exerting a lot of effort, but you can just imagine people saying, "Lighten up man! Why are you so focused on the foundation? You can't live in a foundation. Get the house up, that is what matters!"

## **Two Kinds of Builders**

Not only are there two kinds of houses, but also two kinds of builders. The builder who built on

the sand, Jesus calls foolish. In fact, the word there in the Greek literally means blockhead (Funny that being a builder). A foolish person was someone who failed to weigh matters in order to choose what was best. The foolish man did not choose wisely, and so he chose sand. He took the simple, quickest, and popular route—and he paid the price for it. On the other hand, the wise builder knew that the foundation was the key to a good home. He knew that faster was not better. The wise man knew that no temporary pleasure could compensate for the pain of having his home crash down on his head.

### **One Kind of Experience**

Third, while there are two kinds of houses and two kinds of builders, there is only one kind of experience. Look back at the verses in Matthew 7. What same thing came to each home? The storm. Without exception, every family encounters storms at some point. Financial crises, health issues, and the death of a loved one are just a few of the storms that families face. I don't know which heartache is yours, but a storm is coming. I wish it were not true, and I wish I had the power to protect you from it, but storms come to every home at sometime.

### **Two Kinds of Outcomes**

Finally, we see two kinds of outcomes. The house built on the sand experienced total collapse. Just imagine the regret and shame, the pain and devastation! But the house

built on the rock experienced endurance. What relief, security, joy, and victory!

### **Hearing Isn't Enough**

Let me ask you, "Who are the 'sandy builders' in this passage?" They are the foolish people. But look more closely at Matthew 7:26. They are the people who are hearing but are not doing. So let's dispense with the notion that the people building on the sand are relaxing in bed rather than worshiping God in church on Sunday.

Not so! They are hearing God's truth regularly, but they are doing nothing about it. Does that describe you? Don't wait for the storms of life to force you to your knees. Let the Word of God change your course of action right now, and in humility acknowledge that you need to start doing what you're hearing.

Now look again at verse 24, and consider what it means to build on the rock. Jesus says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them." Again, it's not about hearing the Word; it's about doing it. Don't go to church and let the worship and the Word stir your heart week after week, but then exit no different than you entered! Psalm 95:7-8 says, "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your heart." With that, renew your minds and put God's master plan (His Word) into action in your life- today. Don't build your life on sand, like those people who heard but did nothing about it. Do it today!

# One Night in a Driveway

## Reflections on Thirty Years of Faith

*By Charles Colson*

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**T**HIRTY YEARS AGO today, I visited Tom Phillips, president of the Raytheon Company, at his home outside of Boston. I had represented Raytheon before going to the White House, and I was about to start again.

But I visited him for another reason as well. I knew Tom had become a Christian, and he seemed so different. I wanted to ask him what had happened.

That night he read to me from *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis, particularly a chapter about the great sin that is pride. A proud man is always walking through life looking down on other people and on other things, said Lewis. As a result, he cannot see something above himself immeasurably superior—God.

Tom, that night, told me about encountering Christ in his own life. He didn't realize it, but I was in the depths of deep despair over Watergate, watching the president I had helped for four years flounder in office. I had also heard that I might become a target of the investigation as well. In short, my world was collapsing.

That night, as Tom was telling me about Jesus, I listened attentively, but didn't let on about

my need. When he offered to pray, I thanked him but said, no, I would see him sometime after I had read C. S. Lewis's book. But when I got in the car that night, I couldn't drive it out of the driveway. Ex-Marine captain, White House tough guy, I was crying too hard, calling out to God. I didn't know what to say; I just knew I needed Jesus, and He came into my life.

That was thirty years ago.

I've been reflecting of late on the things God has done over that time. As I think about my life, the beginning of the prison ministry, our work in the justice area, our international ministry that reaches one hundred countries, and the work of the Wilberforce Forum and BreakPoint, I have come to appreciate the doctrine of providence. It's not the world's idea of fate or luck, but the reality of God's divine intervention. He orchestrates the lives of His children to accomplish His good purposes.

God has certainly ordered my steps. I couldn't have imagined when I was in prison that I would someday go back to the White House with ex-offenders as I did on June 18—or that we would be running prisons that have an 8 percent recidivism rate—or that

BreakPoint would be heard daily on one thousand radio outlets across the United States and on the Internet.

The truth that is uppermost in my mind today is that God isn't finished. As long as we're alive, He's at work in our lives. We can live lives of obedience in any field because God providentially arranges the circumstances of our lives to achieve His objectives.

And that leads to the greatest joy I've found in life. As I look back on my life, it's not having been to Buckingham Palace to receive the Templeton Prize, or getting honorary degrees, or writing books. The greatest joy is to see how God

has used my life to touch the lives of others, people hurting and in need. It has been a long time since the dark days of Watergate. I'm still astounded that God would take someone who was infamous in the Watergate scandal, and soon to be a convicted felon, and take him into His family and then order his steps in the way He has with me. God touched me at that moment in Tom Phillips's driveway, and thirty years later, His love and kindness touch and astound me still.

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BreakPoint with Charles Colson  
Commentary #030812 - 08/12/2003

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## The 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference

**T**HIS CONFERENCE LOOKED at the great subject of Justification and brought many well-known figures to speak over 3 days in Edinburgh from 25th to 28th August. The opening act of worship was held on the Monday evening and was preached by Mark Bonnington.

Tuesday began with Nick Needham from the Highland Theological Institute speaking on 'Justification in the Church Fathers'. This was followed by David Wright of Edinburgh on 'Justification in Augustine'. In the afternoon Carl Trueman from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia spoke on 'Luther' and his well known phrase simul peccator simul justus. This was followed by Karla Wubbenhorst from America telling us about 'Justification in Calvin'. Tuesday evening heard Tony Lane speak on 'Regenburg 1541 & Trent'. On Wednesday Simon Gathercole spoke on 'Paul's Justification - A Proposal', and then the new Bishop of Durham N T Wright gave his paper 'The New Perspective on Paul'. In the afternoon Henri Blocher from France revealed the 'Lutheran/RC Declaration on Justification', and finally on Wednesday Bruce MacCormack from the USA spoke on the 'Imputation of Christ's Righteousness'. Friday heard Andrew McGowan from the Highland Theological Institute speak on 'Justification and the Ordo Salutis' and then there was the open discussion with all the speakers on the panel!

The conference showed how important it was to go back to the Holy Scriptures and the original languages for our doctrine. The Church Fathers and Augustine were all very 'woolly' about the meaning of justification - and certainly did not have the vital meaning most of us would attach to it today.

# What is Repentance?

The article below is a reprint from Derek Prime's 'Bible Answers' and used with permission. A complete book with 100 Questions and Answers is published by Christian Focus Publications. ISBN 1085792-644-7

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**Question: What is repentance?**

***Answer: Repentance is turning from sin to God, as a result of a change of mind and heart about sin.***

## **1. The necessity of repentance.**

- (a) God commands it of all people everywhere (Acts 17:30).
- (b) Unless we repent, we will perish (Luke 13:3, 5).
- (c) Repentance is the first response demanded of us if we are to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).
- (d) Repentance is the first condition God imposes if we are to find Him (Zech. 1:3,4; Acts 20:21).
- (e) Repentance is a condition of cleansing (Isa. 6:5-7).
- (f) Repentance is a condition of forgiveness (Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19).
- (g) Repentance is a condition of entry into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 4:17).
- (h) Repentance is a condition of eternal life (Acts I 1:18).
- (i) Repentance is a condition of escaping the judgment of God upon sin (Acts 17:30,31).

## **2. Repentance is turning from sin to God.**

- (a) Repentance is the result of the eyes of the mind being opened to understand our need as sinners before God (Acts 26:17, 18).
- (b) Repentance is associated with the idea of turning (Acts 3:19; 26:20).
- (c) Repentance is turning away from acts that lead to death (Heb. 6:1); it is turning from wicked ways (2 Chron. 7:14); it is turning from our sins and giving attention to God's truth (Dan. 9:13); it is turning away from our evil ways to God (Ezek. 33:11).
- (d) Repentance involves the recognition of sin as failure to keep God's decrees or laws (Mal. 3:7).

- (e) Repentance means seeing how awful sin is in God's sight (Ps. 51:4), and recognising the afflictions of our own heart (I Kings 8:38).
- (f) Conviction of sin is necessary for repentance to take place (Acts 2:37,38).
- (g) Repentance involves a real sorrow and grief because of sin (Luke 22:62; 2 Cor. 7:8-10).
- (h) Repentance brings such a sense of shame (Ezra 9:6-15; Jer. 31:19) that we despise ourselves for our sin (Job 42:6).
- (i) Repentance is the wicked forsaking their evil ways and thoughts and returning to the Lord, that He may have mercy on them and freely pardon them (Isa. 55:7).
- (j) Repentance means inevitably a fundamental break with the past (Luke 9:23,24; 14:26,27,33).

### **3. Characteristics of true repentance.**

- (a) Unfortunately false repentance is a possibility: Saul (I Sam. 15:24-30) and Ahab (I Kings 21:27-29) provide examples of false repentance.
- (b) True repentance springs from a recognition of God as the Lord (Jer. 3:22).
- (c) It is seen in sorrow for sin (Joel 2:12; 2 Cor. 7:9).
- (d) It is rational and openly declared (Hos. 14:2).
- (e) It is accompanied by confession, renunciation and dedication (Hos. 14:1-3).
- (f) It is wholehearted (Joel 2:12, 13).
- (g) It is humble (Jonah 3:6; 2 Chron. 7:14; Jas. 4:9, 10).
- (h) It is a work and a gift of God (Acts 11:18).

### **4. Motives for repentance.**

- (a) God's character is a tremendous encouragement to repentance. He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (Joel 2:13).
- (b) God's patience with us should lead us towards repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).
- (c) God's kindness is meant to lead us to a change of heart about sin (Rom. 2:4).
- (d) God pleads with us to repent (Isa. 30:15).
- (e) God never despises repentance (Jonah 3:9; Luke 15:7, 10).
- (f) Christ came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32).
- (g) Repentance is called for in the light of what God has

accomplished for sinners through Christ's saving work (Acts 3:18,19; 5:31).

(h) Repentance is the first part of conversion, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the second (Acts 20:21; Mark 1:15).

## 5. Evidences of repentance.

(a) True repentance brings no regret but leads to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10).

(b) Practical reformation is to be expected (Judg. 6:25-27; Luke 19:8).

(c) Actions follow that give proof of a change of mind about sin (Joel 2:12; Acts 26:20), especially restitution where necessary (Ezek. 33:14-16).

(d) Repentance produces appropriate fruit (Matt. 3:8; Luke 13:6-9).

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# Knowledge, the Bible and Spiritual Transformation

**K**NOWLEDGE ABOUT THE Bible is an indispensable good. But knowledge does not **by itself** lead to spiritual transformation. When Paul urged the Christians at Rome to *"be transformed by the renewing of your minds"* he was thinking of far more than just the acquisition of information. 'Mind' refers to a whole range of perceiving, understanding, valuing, and feeling that in turn determines the way we live. (Calvin commented on this verse: 'It means that we will think, speak, meditate, and do all things with a view to God's glory.')

This renewal will only take place when we, to echo Paul's words, *"present our bodies as living sacrifices"* - as we arrange our lives around those practices, relationships, and experiences through which God produces transformation.

Moreover, while knowledge is vital and should be prized, it also poses some dangers. It often demolishes humility. The sobriquet 'know-it-all' is never used as a compliment. The Bible itself contains warnings: *"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"*.

Both human experience and the Bible teach that increased knowledge - even the knowledge of the Scriptures - does not automatically produce transformed people.

To be filled with knowledge about the Bible but to be unwashed by it is worse than not knowing it at all. The goal is not for us to get through the Scriptures. The goal is to get the Scriptures through us. *John Ortberg*

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# Revival!

“In a Day of Small Things” - by *John H Armstrong*

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**I**N ZECHARIAH 4:10, God asks Zechariah “*Who despises the day of small things?*”. He said this to address the discouragement that prevailed among the Israelites at that time. The work of rebuilding the temple had begun under Zerubbabel.

Progress seemed impossible. Worst of all, at least in the eyes of the people, was that the new temple was nowhere nearly as grand as the one that had been destroyed. The people were comparing the present temple with the past one, and had fallen into the trap of “*despising the day of small things*”. As a result they became easily discouraged and, for a while, neglected the rebuilding of the temple altogether.

There is a lesson here for us. We must be careful as we urge increasing numbers of people to pray for revival and to believe that God might be pleased to yet “*revive us again in the midst of the years*”. On the one hand, as we point out that revivals are rare, we might discourage earnest prayer and vision regarding the future. On the other hand, we might overemphasis the potential for revival and an outpouring of God’s Spirit, we could end up with many disappointed people if revival doesn’t come.

In Zerubabel’s time the grave danger was that of looking back to

the days when the temple was far more glorious. This would cause the devout to despise the present and its blessings and difficulties. I am convinced that Christians today could very easily look at the great revivals of the past and be wrongly disappointed with the present time. I myself have studied these outpourings of the Spirit with such interest - and for so long - that sometimes I am inclined to “*despise the day of small things*”.

A friend, David Kingdom, who lives in Wales where many revivals have occurred, has helpfully written: “The same temptation (ie, to despise the day of small things) is real today. We may look back to past seasons of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit...make a comparison with the present, and settle down to await revival in what amounts to a spirit of resigned fatalism. We may read of the mighty revivals of the past centuries and wistfully say ‘If only we had such a revival today, things would be different’. And so they would, but what is our duty in a day of small things?”

Some people have recently suggested that there is very little we can do until revival comes. I greatly disagree. Let me explain.

A few years ago I came to realise that as much as I had prayed for revival and hoped that God

might yet send great effusions of the Spirit in my lifetime, I needed to realise that I could live and die and never see any vast great awakening. I realised that I had to accept this possibility. I can't just wait for revival to come before I get active in the work of proclaiming the gospel. If revival never came, then what would be my excuse before the judgment seat of Christ if I failed to witness, to handle the Word accurately and faithfully, and to pray as I ought? How could I answer the

Lord of the church for not telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth no matter what consequences followed? Is it not my present duty to obey regardless of the outcome? Will I stand before Christ in that coming day and say "Lord, I didn't seek to fulfil the great commission, I didn't help with resolving problems in the North American Church, and I didn't give sacrificially for the work of Christ because I was eagerly waiting for revival to break out across the nation"?

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Church Hall. Treasurer: D M Macdonald, Scoraig, 8 Kinnettas  
Square, Strathpeffer IV14 9BD, Tel 01997 421847.

## DUNDEE

Revd Donald C Macaskill,  
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Dens Road Church - 11 Dens Road - 11am & 6.30pm, usually  
Thu 7pm (confirm on website). Treasurer: Mr Kevin Stirling,  
40 Gottenstone Drive, Dundee DD5 1QX, Tel 01382 770381.  
www.apcdundee.org.uk  
*Communion*s: 4 per year as arranged.

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Viewforth Church of Scotland, 104 Gilmore Place -  
12 noon & 6.15pm, Wed 7.30pm in manse.  
Treasurer: Mr A Cumming, 31 Doune Park, Dalgety Bay,  
Dunfermline, KY11 9LX Tel 01383 825637.  
www.welcome.to/edinburghapc  
*Communion*s: last in February and September

## FORT WILLIAM

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High Street, 11am & 6.30pm, Thursday 7.30pm.  
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Inverness-shire PH34 4EZ, Tel 01397 712405.

## HARRIS

Contact: Norman MacDonald Tel 01859 530345.  
Seilabost School - 12 noon & 6pm Tue 7.30pm.  
Treasurer: John MacKinnon, 8 Stockinish, Isle of Harris HS3  
3EN Tel 01859 530211.  
*Communion*s: Last in April and September

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6.30pm, Wed 7.30pm.  
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Place, Inverness IV2 4DQ, Tel 01463 231364.  
www.apcinverness.freeuk.com  
*Communion*s: Fourth in January, April, June, September

## KINLOCHBERVIE

Kinlochbervie: Conference Room, Harbour Offices, 11.30am;  
Treasurer: W D MacLeod, 114 Inshegna, Rhiconich, by Lairg  
IV27 4RH Tel 01971 521388.  
*Communion*: Third in March

## LAIRG & ROGART

Revd Alexander Murray,  
APC Manse, Saval Road, Lairg, IV27 4EH,  
Tel 01549 402176  
Email: amurray@lairg.freeserve.co.uk  
Lairg Church - 11.30am, 1st, 3rd, 5th Weds 7pm;  
Rogart Church - 6pm. 2nd, 4th Weds 7pm.  
Treasurer: Miss Annie J Morrison, Woodlands, Lairg IV27  
4DB; Tel 01549 402362.  
*Communion*s: Lairg: First in June and December. Rogart:  
First in July.

## LOCHCARRON

**(Lochcarron-Lochalsh Congregation)** Services held jointly  
with Free Church, 11am & 6pm, Wed 7.30pm, 2nd & 3rd  
Lord's Day Kishorn 3pm. Treasurer: Mrs Alison Stewart, 13  
Kirkton Gardens, Lochcarron IV54 8UQ, Tel 01520 722239  
Email: ajs.kishorn@tesco.net

## LOCHINVER & STOER & DRUMBEG

Services held jointly with Free Church of Scotland  
Morning services alternating between Stoer Free Church &  
Drumbeg APC - 11pm. Evening service Lochinver Free  
Church at 1700hrs (5pm) Contacts: Mrs E. MacKenzie,  
Church Road, Stoer, Sutherland, IV27 4SE, Tel 01571  
855279. Mrs I Macauley, Ard Na Mara, Stoer, Sutherland

## OBAN

Revd Archibald McPhail,  
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PA34, Tel 01631 566259 and D Morrison, Glenstruan, Old  
Shore Road, Connel, PA37, Tel 01631 710226.  
*Communion*s: First in May and November

## PLOCKTON & KYLE

**(Lochcarron-Lochalsh congregation)** Mr. J. van Woerden,  
8 Bank Street, Plockton IV52 8TP Tel 01599 544272 Email:  
jan.vanwoerden@virgin.net  
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## POOLEWE

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Poolewe 10.45am, Inverasdale 4.30pm, Aultbea 6.30pm.  
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with APC pulpit supply. Treasurer/Contact: K MacLean,  
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Email: kendunedin@aol.com  
*Communion*: Third in August

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Contact: Malcolm Nicolson, 4 Heatherfield, Portree IV51 9NE  
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Dunvegan: first in June

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