

CHRISTIAN WATCH

A PROTESTANT BIBLICAL WITNESS

"And what I say unto you

I say unto all, Watch"

Mark 13:37

NEWSLETTER

June 2014

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To all Christian Watch Members

Dear Friends,

Greetings in the precious Name of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Since our last Newsletter a month ago, we have received the startling news that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has given an interview to 'Pink News' in which he said – and I quote – “.....we have to accept, and quite rightly, that the same-sex Marriage Act is law, **and that its right and proper.** It's the law of the land.....**and that's great.**” He has also described some gay relationships as being '**stunning**' (Emphasis ours). We can but quote the words of Scripture itself - *'woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (Isaiah 5 v 20).

We live in dark days – and Justin Welby is guilty of placing godless legislation – forced through by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2013 – above the law of God and the Christian-based legislation of our forefathers such as the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and the Coronation Oath.

We have also discovered that the former Archbishop of Canterbury is on record as saying that Britain can accommodate Sharia Law. As we go to Press, it seems apparent that Islamic fundamentalism is already hard at work in the Birmingham area where the attempted 'Trojan horse' separatist take-over of some State schools has been exposed. Islam will never bring any economic well-being to Britain other than vested Muslim interests as this religion is separatist in policy and any project undertaken by it threatens social cohesion as it governs all aspects of a person's life and permits little, if any, departure from its rules. Britain's heritage and culture are under threat – with the Islamic rejection of free speech and democracy - and already we see that Sharia banking is on the ascendancy. How important it is that God's people fight the good fight of faith – whatever the consequences (I Timothy 6 v 12) and wear the armour provided for us, as outlined in Ephesians chapter 6.

The anniversary of D-day – 70 years ago this month – is a potent reminder of how men and women gave their lives to resist the horrible reality of Nazi Germany; dying that this nation – and indeed the whole of Western civilisation – may be free. But, in the article **That Knock on the Door in the Middle of the Night** by Bill Muehlenberg of CultureWatch, we discover that we have not learned the lessons of history. Democracy is slowly but surely disappearing – anti-discrimination laws; equal opportunity legislation; racial and religious vilification acts; so-called hate speech laws (not to mention the undemocratic European Union) – all of which affect our Christian way of life. As we defend Biblical truth, is it that 'that knock on the door in the middle of the night' is drawing ever closer?

From Sin and Salvation we have included a message from J.C. Philpot, **What is Truth?** Truth is threefold – the Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth; His Holy Word is the Scripture of truth and it is lodged in the hearts of His believing people whom He sanctifies by His truth.

The doctrines of Sovereign grace are glorious and thoroughly Scriptural but, in the article **Merely Assenting to Election Proves Nothing in Itself**, Shaun Willcock of Bible-based Ministries warns that although there is today an apparent revival of the doctrines of grace, there is not a corresponding holiness of life. There is a great need in our day – not to hear less of the doctrines of grace – but to hear more of Biblical separation and holiness.

An exciting missionary report from Dr. Ian Sadler (one of our members) on his journeys through the Congo and Zambia has been included – **Spreading the Word of God in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia**. There is much confusion and ignorance in these countries over the many Bible versions available and it is good to report on this most successful venture undertaken by the Free Grace Evangelistic Association. At the close of Mark's Gospel, we are exhorted to '*go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*' We thank God for journeying mercies and for the distribution of Bibles and Christian literature on such a wide scale.

News Items this month refers to the ever-growing departure from Biblical teaching in the national Church in Scotland following the introduction of gay men and women into the ministry. Stornoway High have sadly been left with no alternative but to leave this denomination, but we trust that they will know the Lord's hand upon them for good in their witness for Him. Secondly, the Pope has been visiting Israel where he has been accused of meddling when he called for a Palestinian State to be fully established. Finally, we include the Annual resolution from the Trustees of the Gospel Magazine calling upon Her Majesty's Government to allow no further erosion of our Christian heritage in relation to the Lord's Day. *Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it Holy* (4th Commandment).

No-one can deny the devastating effects of sin in human experience and so, for our spiritual benefit and encouragement, we have included a sermon entitled **The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant** by our good friend and brother in Christ, Dr. Alan Clifford. How merciful is our God and here we discover His unlimited mercy, His conditional mercy, His abused mercy and His Divine mercy.

We close our Newsletter with a most encouraging verse outlining how God is revealed in His Names – Jireh, Shalom, Shammah, Rophi and Nissi.

However, we would also like to make reference to a new project that is being undertaken – **The 10 Commandments in Schools** – and a letter from our Chairman, together with a sample card from the Trinitarian Bible Society, is enclosed herewith. We referred earlier to the 'Trojan horse' takeover of some State schools in the Birmingham area, which indicates how important it is that we invest in our children's' spiritual education and so this new initiative is prayerfully placed before you. The objective is to get primary school children to learn the 10 Commandments – to equip them with appropriate study materials – and to teach them the origin of the 10 Commandments and how they fit into our present-day society.

Substantial funds will be required if we are to effectively launch this campaign – details are included in the enclosed letter together with more detailed information. If you feel you can help in any way, we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in His service,

Ian R. Henderson

Ian R. Henderson,
Vice-Chairman.

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That Knock on the Door in the Middle of the Night

By: Bill Muehlenberg

One of the most frightening and characteristic features of a police state is the terrible occurrence of being woken in the middle of the night by State security forces. Whether it was Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, or Mao's China, this was an ever-present reality and fear for many millions of ordinary citizens.

No-one was safe. At any time, the police forces could be at your door and the next thing you know you are dragged off by the authorities, often never to be seen again. And usually absolutely no crime was committed – it is just that the State saw you as a threat to their existence.

Of course, millions of people were rounded up in such totalitarian societies and millions were killed. Individual dignity, humanity and freedom meant nothing to these ugly statist. Only the good of the Fatherland, or the New Man, or the utopian State, or whatever, mattered.

We have just celebrated the 70th anniversary of D-Day, in which brave lads from the free world sacrificed their lives to put an end to such tyranny and injustice. The horrible reality of Nazi Germany had to be resisted and countless lives were lost to keep the world free of such evil.

But the almost unthinkable is now happening: the once free world is well on its way to becoming another police state. Even though so many lives were lost and so much blood was shed seven decades ago, it seems that we have not learned the lessons of history.

Instead, we are simply repeating its mistakes. I have been warning for decades now – to mostly deaf ears unfortunately – that we in the West are headed in a very precarious direction. But the loss of freedoms and the restriction of our liberties are not happening overtly, but covertly.

And the means by which democracy is slowly but surely disappearing are very sneaky, incremental and piecemeal. We don't even know it is happening. Indeed, it is often occurring through what seems to be all rather sensible and necessary legislation.

Thus we have things like anti-discrimination laws; equal opportunity legislation; racial and religious vilification acts and so-called hate speech laws springing up everywhere in the West. Again, they sound like they might be useful things to have, but they are mostly nefarious laws which are mainly aimed at silencing unpopular people with unpopular opinions.

The forces of political correctness – most notably the radical homosexual lobby and the Islamic lobby - have used these laws to silence all opposition to their causes. My new book will document hundreds of examples of this happening at the hands of the radical homosexualists.

Indeed, my recent time in Europe and England greatly alarmed me. The iron fist of the homosexual juggernaut is utterly frightening to behold. The ordinary citizen seems to be quite powerless to resist it in any way. Any faulty (non-PC) thought or speech is quickly and mercilessly pounced upon by the militant homosexual activists and their stooges in the State apparatus.

I spoke with many brave Christian resistance fighters while there. Some of them are right in the middle of long, drawn-out and expensive legal battles with the 'tolerance brigade'. These groups endlessly scream about tolerance and diversity, yet show absolutely no tolerance to anyone who dares to disagree with them.

And they are using the heavy hand of the law to make sure that everyone complies with their dreams for a brave new world. Western legislatures are jumping in the bed with the activists, doing their every bidding it seems. It is a very scary place to be in at the moment.

As a clear indication of all this, just moments ago I received this shocking and concerning email from one of these folks I had just met in the UK. This brave soul said this:

Dear All,

The police just came round to my house with an anonymous complaint made about my on-line activities. They warned me that 'homophobia' is a criminal offence. I said, "What about freedom of speech?" They said, "Complaints have been made." I said, "Who made them?" They said, "We don't know, they come from another police force in another area." I pointed out to them that I get abuse and death threats all the time and even showed them on Facebook, but they were not interested. They said "This is a warning." So what is the next step? The knock on the door in the middle of the night?

This courageous defender of Biblical truth is exactly right of course. That knock on the door in the middle of the night certainly seems to be just around the corner. The militants have so established themselves and their agenda, that no-one is safe who dares to take a different point of view.

We are all at risk now. Of course, some people will not suffer in the least. Those cowardly and compromised Christians, who urge us to just get along with, and accommodate ourselves to, the homosexual agenda, or the creeping sharia agenda, will not be in any trouble.

Their craven appeasement and capitulation will put them in good standing with the activists – at least temporarily. But when these militants really get into power, especially the Islamists, the first ones to lose their heads will be these “useful idiots,” as Lenin referred to them.

Friends, we are in a war. Every day, the other side is getting further emboldened to carry out their fascist agendas. And, all the while, most Christians are snoozing right through all this. They don't seem to know and they don't seem to care. And they have blood on their hands as a result.

Let me close with three words which came out of that great conflict between Nazis and freedom. The first quote by Martin Niemoller, German Pastor and Holocaust survivor, is well known:

“In Germany, they came first for the Communists - and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews - and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists - and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics - and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me - and by that time no-one was left to speak up.”

The second speaks for itself:

“I lived in Germany during the Nazi Holocaust. I considered myself a Christian. We heard stories of what was happening to the Jews, but we tried to distance ourselves from it, because, what could anyone do to stop it? A railroad track ran behind our small church and each Sunday morning we could hear the whistle in the distance and then the wheels coming over the tracks. We became disturbed when we heard the cries coming from the train as it passed by. We realised that it was carrying Jews like cattle in the cars! Week after week the whistle would blow. We dreaded to hear the sound of those wheels because we knew that we could hear the cries of the Jews en route to a death camp. Their screams tormented us.

We knew the time the train was coming and when we heard the whistle blow we began singing hymns. By the time the train came past our church we were singing at the top of our voices. If we heard the screams, we sang more loudly and soon we heard them no more. Years have passed

and no-one talks about it any more. But I still hear that train whistle in my sleep. God forgive me; forgive all of us who called ourselves Christians, yet did nothing to intervene.”

Finally, the words of the Lutheran Pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died in a Nazi prison camp: *“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”*

(CultureWatch – Bill Muehlenberg’s commentary on issues of the day.
<http://billmuehlenberg.com>)

What is Truth?

By: J. C. Philpot

Let us come to the question which I have undertaken to answer, “What is truth?” When Pilate asked that question (John 18:38) of Him who was the Truth itself, he had a reference to the Lord’s preceding words: “Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.” The Lord’s own words, therefore, afford the only true key to the question and give a clue to the right answer.

By “truth” the Lord meant, beyond all doubt, Divine truth, Heavenly truth, religious truth – not natural, or scientific, or even moral truth, though the last would be included, but the special truth which He came from Heaven to teach, reveal and exemplify by His life, death and resurrection. Now in this sense ask yourself, *What* is truth? Can you define it in your own mind? Have you ever thought what truth is? Have you any distinct idea, which you can express in a few words, of its peculiar nature, its distinguishing features, or its essential character? Perhaps not; for few persons really think or examine any subject for themselves, even in these important matters.

Let me then define it for you. According to my view of it, truth, that is Divine truth, is a gracious revelation given by God Himself of His character, of His mind and of His will. This is as short and as clear a definition as I can give.

But *where* has God been pleased to give it? For He has given it that we may know, believe and enjoy it. He has lodged it in three sacred depositories. He has lodged it primarily in *the Person of His dear Son*, who is the truth itself (John 14:6). He has lodged it, secondly, in *the pages of His Holy Word*, which is called “the Scripture of truth” (Dan.10:21). And He has lodged it, thirdly, in *the hearts of His believing people*, whom He sanctifies by His truth (John 17:17).

These then, are the three depositories of Divine truth; so that out of the Son of God, out of the Scriptures, and out of the hearts of God’s people, there is no Divine truth to be known, believed or enjoyed.

(From: ‘Sin and Salvation’ – Selections from J. C. Philpot
Edited by B. A. Ramsbottom)

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 8:31, 32

Merely Assenting to Election Proves Nothing in Itself

*The Doctrines of Grace are oft held in the head
By those who are in sins still dead!*

By

Shaun Willcock

The doctrines of sovereign grace are glorious and thoroughly Scriptural doctrines. Indeed, the Gospel of the grace of God is the only true Gospel; and this Gospel tells us that man is totally depraved, utterly powerless to save himself (Rom.3:9-20); but God, from all eternity, of His free grace and mercy, elected some from every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue, unto salvation in Jesus Christ (Rom.9:10-24; Eph.1:3-6); and in the fulness of time, Christ died for the elect, and for them alone (Eph.5:25; Jn.10:11,26,28); and, in God's appointed time, each one of the elect is irresistibly drawn to Christ for salvation (Jn.6:37,44); and those thus drawn to Christ, never perish, but having been predestinated, called, and justified, they are glorified in due time (Rom.8:29,30). To be sound in doctrine, one must be well-acquainted with these Scriptural doctrines.

However, merely holding to sound doctrine in the head is not enough! Having a sound theology is *not* an automatic guarantee of the work of regeneration!

For centuries, these Scriptural truths were held to firmly, and faithfully proclaimed, throughout the Christian Church. Then, that false doctrinal system known as "Arminianism," with its emphasis on man's supposed "free will" and its denial of the sovereignty of God in salvation, held sway almost universally over professing Christendom. By the mid-twentieth century, the situation was bleak: it seemed as if the entire professing Church was Arminian.

Over the past few decades, however, there has been a revival of interest in the great doctrines of sovereign grace. Churches have arisen which hold to these Biblical truths and utterly reject Arminianism; Ministers all over the world stand up in pulpits every week and expound these doctrines to their congregations; and publishing houses are hard at work re-publishing the great old doctrinal classics of past ages, as well as new works emphasising these doctrines.

And yet... something is wrong.

Yes, there is a revival of the doctrines of grace – but not, alas! a corresponding holiness of life. Everywhere we hear people saying, "Isn't it wonderful? So-and-so has come to an understanding of the doctrines of grace!" This is wonderful when the person is a true Christian. But all too often, "coming to the doctrines of grace" is perceived as being all that is necessary, and there appears to be little or no emphasis on a life of holiness. A bare acceptance of these doctrines is worthless on its own. "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ *depart from iniquity*" (2 Tim.2:19) – not just wax eloquent about predestination and election! The embracing of the doctrines of grace, without holiness of life, is nothing but a dead orthodoxy. While holding to sound doctrine in the head, people can yet be "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph.2:1); and, while holding to true doctrine on paper, in sound confessions of faith, a church can be a "congregation of the dead" (Prov.21:16).

It is our sad experience that the great majority of those who profess to be Christ's today – even within the most doctrinally-sound, sovereign grace churches – are slaves to the television, sport-idolaters, immodest in dress, covetous, "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim.3:4,5). When are we going to hear Pastors speak out against *these* things – these *sins* – instead of only preaching against Arminianism? Let me be clearly understood: Arminianism **MUST** be refuted. It is a subtle and deadly poison. But this is not the Minister's whole duty! Why do we see so many retreats, and conferences, devoted to the exposition of the doctrines of grace, but none devoted to Holy

living, and separation from the world? Is a Minister declaring “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) when he forcefully exposes the errors of Arminianism, but fails to speak out against the worldliness and sin to be found within the members of his own congregation? Having sound doctrine in their heads, they yet deny Christ by their lives; “they profess that they know God; but in *works* they deny Him” (Tit.1:16). They name the Holy Name of Christ; but if there is no departure from iniquity, they are strangers to the Christ they name – regardless of all the head-knowledge they have of the doctrines of grace. Sound doctrine in the heart of a *true* believer will result in holiness of life! Too many are looking only at what a man believes, instead of also looking at how he lives. “If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor.5:17). There must be a Biblical balance between doctrine and fruit. A man who is sound in doctrine, but sinful in practice, is not a Christian, regardless of how well he can expound the doctrines of grace.

What am I contending for, in these lines? In short – not just the form, but the POWER of godliness. As much as I love the precious doctrines of sovereign grace; as much as I love to meditate on them, to hear them expounded, to read of them – I cannot keep silent when those who are sound in doctrine give no evidence of loathing sin and worldliness! What, then, becomes of their sound doctrine? There is much talk, but little or no *adorning* of the doctrine of God (Tit.2:10). All their words, then, are empty words, worthless without the adorning of a life of obedience to the Lord.

Contrary to what many within sovereign grace Churches seem to think, fellowship cannot be had merely on the basis of agreement on the doctrines of grace! Correctly separating from those who hold to false doctrine, many who hold to election are quite prepared to fellowship with any others who hold to this doctrine, no other test being applied. This is just as sinful as fellowshiping with heretics! Once again let it be said: soundness in doctrine is not an infallible proof of regeneration. If one makes an assent to the doctrines of grace almost the sole basis for fellowship, then one has erred as much as those who make some other matter the sole requirement for fellowship. An assent to the doctrines of grace appears to have become the standard around which many are prepared to gather for fellowship. It *is* vital – but it is not all! Holiness of life is just as vital!

It is time that those who profess to love the blessed doctrines of sovereign grace take a good, hard, long look at the lack of *fruit* being produced by the great majority of those who claim to hold to these truths. May these truths be proclaimed loudly and clearly in our day – but what God has joined together, let not man put asunder! “Love not the world”(1 Jn.2:15) is forever wedded to “the love of the truth”(2 Thess.2:10). Where these doctrines are received into the heart of a true believer, they will bear fruit. But where they are merely held to intellectually, and produce no fruit, there is no work of grace. Let us not hear less of the doctrines of grace – but let us hear more of Biblical separation and holiness! Only then will there be a Biblical balance. Churches would shrink in size, but Christ and his Gospel would be glorified by the faithful remnant, the truly regenerate. Tragically, most quite obviously prefer large numbers to faithful and Godly disciples.

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**O Lord, we need Thy special care,
To guard us day and night;
Teach us Thy Name to love and fear,
And in Thy ways delight.**

Spreading the Word of God in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia

*By Dr Ian Sadler, Chairman of Free Grace Evangelistic Association (FGEA)
(Dr Sadler is also a member of Christian Watch)*

Seeking the grace and help of God, I left Britain on 28 April, 2014 for Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Lubumbashi is the capital of Katanga province, which is closely linked to Zambia. The so-called industrial “Copperbelt” straddles both Katanga and Zambia. Whilst Katanga has not been badly affected by the Congolese civil war, it is not a place for the casual visitor!

Over the previous four months of preparations, both I and African brethren faced many unforeseen problems and challenges, such that I seriously wondered whether the visit could go ahead. However, in answer to prayer and submission to the will of God, the way was eventually opened. Indeed “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Yet our glorious hope is that Christ has risen “far above all principality and power” (Ephesians 6.12, 1.21). We had problems obtaining the local official documentation for my visa and there were security threats in Congo near the border crossing into Zambia at Kasumbalesa, where there had been a series of fatal shootings of foreigners. We thus had to venture in faith, knowing we must pass through Kasumbalesa ourselves.

I arrived at Lubumbashi airport carrying over 300 French booklets, 10 French Martin New Testaments and a small number of English KJV Bibles and booklets. This airport is definitely not for the faint-hearted traveller! I silently prayed that the Lord would preserve me. After passing through immigration, I was then in a small but very chaotic baggage hall, with a lot of noise and shouting. Many of those present did not appear to be passengers. I was immediately approached by a man with some form of identification, asking to see my baggage receipts and asked me what I was doing in Congo. I said that I was a Minister visiting for preaching and distributing books/Scriptures. He led me to the baggage carousel, where my first case was just appearing. I saw that there was almost a fight over other baggage as it was being loaded on to the carousel. Then my second case arrived, he took charge of it, then led me to Customs, telling them who I was. They let me straight through without any question, despite the high customs value of the books I was carrying. Then I was led through several more checks and out into the open. This man was evidently a porter who expected some payment, but he had been provided by God to spare me from potentially serious difficulties in an unknown place. At that moment my Zambian friend (and regional Director for FGEA), Duwen Musaka, came up with Congolese brethren to receive me. The porter was paid appropriately and also given a copy of the book “Love of God” in French. They said to me that this porter was “a good man”.

The Zambian friends had travelled the previous day through Kasumbalesa to Lubumbashi with 1200 French books (“Love of God” and “Authority of God” specially printed in Zambia), 75 Kiluba Bibles and 100 French TBS booklets “Lord Gave the Word”. 80 Swahili Bibles were also purchased in Lubumbashi. Given the quantity of literature, carrying this from Zambia on buses was quite a feat.

I was lodged in the “Hôtel Belle Vue” in central Lubumbashi. This was a comfortable and functional hotel, but more importantly a secure place where I could stay. Outside the door was a very tall and strong man in military style combat uniform, wearing dark glasses, a grim face and carrying a large truncheon. No loiterers troubled us outside this hotel!

The Church that invited us was a branch of an African denomination, named in English “Rose of Sharon”, or in French “Rose de Saron”. They were holding a 3-4 day Conference, at which I and Duwen Musaka were to speak on behalf of Free Grace Evangelistic Association (FGEA) for

two days on the subject *“The Word of God, a Good Foundation”*, speaking of Christ the eternal Word in union with the written Word (Bible); then warning about unfaithfulness and the error brought in through corrupt Bible versions. I also emphasised the union of Father, Word and Holy Ghost (1 John 5.7), so that the Holy Ghost can never teach contrary to God’s Word. Each adult present received detailed notes in French, of which 200 copies had been printed in the UK; these gave a summary of the teaching from the Bible and detail about the principles of translating and copying God’s Word. I especially covered French Bible versions, giving a warning about the commonly used versions (e.g. Segond or its variants) and providing advice on how to proceed given the near unavailability of sound versions (e.g. David Martin). The notes allowed everyone to see detailed comparisons of key texts between the David Martin, Segond and *“Bible en Français Courant”* (*“Good News”* version in French), that show how Segond and others have systematically attacked the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament and the doctrines of the virgin birth; the deity of Christ and the Trinity in the New Testament. The Ministers were particularly struck when I showed that the name of the hosting church *“La Rose de Saron”* (Song of Solomon 2.1 - the rose of Sharon is Christ) - was faithfully present in the French Martin version. However, in Segond this has been removed and replaced with *“un narcisse de Saron”* (a narcissus of Sharon). In *“Bible en Français Courant”* it is indicated that this is the church speaking, not Christ, and Segond 21 indicates that the Song of Solomon is simply a conversation between *“le jeune homme”* (the young man) and *“la jeune fille”* (the young woman); the sense of the Holy conversation between Christ and the Church being totally suppressed.

The church *“building”* was only made out of plastic sheeting with some metal sheets for the roof. It was located in the *“Bongonga”* quarter of the city, which is a very poor, densely crowded area with no sanitation. Despite this and the sweltering heat, it was a privilege before God to be there and to distribute literature and Bibles to the poor of Christ’s flock. There were a number of Ministers present, along with many men, women and children. A number of Ministers spoke with especial warmth about our work, being very concerned about the issues we raised about Bible versions and the call for faithfulness. I exhorted everyone to take away and prayerfully study the literature, searching the Scriptures whether these things are so. Much of the literature was left in the hands of our host in Lubumbashi for distribution to other Churches.

On Friday 2 May, Duwen Musaka and I left Lubumbashi early in the morning in a taxi on the 60 mile journey to the Kasumbalesa border crossing, praying for the Lord’s safe conduct. We arrived safely at the border, to be met by a noisy crowd of would-be porters, two of whom secured carriage of our cases. After various people closely examined my passport and visa, we went to an office at the actual border where about 6 uniformed men were sitting, one of whom had a large wad of bank notes in his hand on open display, indicating that he wanted a payment. We took no notice, apart from handing him a copy of *“Authority of God”* in French. The man then started looking at the book (rather than ruffling his wad of bank notes) and the officers let us go to the Zambian border post. However, on the Zambian side I was told that my visa was invalid and that I must buy a new entry visa. I politely challenged the feeble reason given for it being invalid; after which the man took away my passport to show it to a more senior officer. A few minutes later he returned, stamped my passport and we were free to go.

We were met by our hosts from Ndola, who had driven up to meet us. We reached Ndola just in time for a quick meal before the FGEA(Zambia) Conference at Ndola began at 2 pm. This was similar to the meeting in Lubumbashi, but conducted in English with a Bemba interpreter. Here we had KJV Bibles to distribute at the end of the Conference on the Saturday afternoon. It is a great God-given privilege that we can read and give to others so faithful and spiritual a translation as that of the KJV: but such versions are not easily obtained in many other languages. Duwen Musaka explained the weakness and errors in many African language Bibles. Apart from being in places a poor translation of an English corrupted version, the African versions have their own peculiar errors. In John 3.16, instead of *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...”*, many native African language versions read *“... He gave His only begotten Child ...”*

During the visit, I became aware that Africa is being greatly troubled by an explosion of “prophets” and other terrible errors being practised by supposed “ministers” of the Gospel. We were told first-hand of a woman who could not have children. Instead of going to her Pastor for Scriptural counsel, she consulted a “prophet” who told her to leave her husband and try for a child from another man! Then from another city we were told of a man with HIV under medical control, who went to a “prophet” for healing. The “prophet” told him to fast for 30 days and take no food or medicine. After 20 days the man’s Pastor realised something was seriously wrong and visited him, but the poor man would not listen to his Pastor’s plea to take food and medicine. On day 27 of his fast the man died. Then there was a “minister” in Ndola who has been offering brooms for £7 that he had blessed, so that for a period of 7 days they could be used to sweep away evil spirits! Otherwise, there were Churches administering “holy water”, various types of soils etc. etc... It was remarkable that the Lord had led us to speak on subjects that were very suited as a warning against such satanic practices being performed in supposedly “spirit-filled churches” (indeed this is the work of a spirit, but not the Holy Spirit). Duwen Musaka read out to all Deuteronomy 13 about the Lord’s warning not to follow those who, even if they perform wonders or signs, teach contrary to God’s Word.

After preaching and resting on the Lord’s Day, we held a two-day FGEA(Zambia) Conference in Kabwe entitled “Teaching the Word of God”. This included the instruction of the young in God’s Word. We were joined by an FGEA representative from Zimbabwe, Norman Kalilombe, who preached twice at the Kabwe Conference. Norman’s message about leaders in the Church was particularly searching and challenging. He said that there are only three types of leader: those who appoint themselves (e.g. Dathan, Abiram and Korah who God destroyed – Numbers 16); those who are appointed by men or at the behest of men (e.g. King Saul who feared the people who had called for his appointment – 1 Samuel 8.5, 15.6); and those appointed by God (e.g. King David). Self-appointed men and women are a particular problem in African Churches.

The final day of ministering was a visit to a rural Church 20 miles from Kabwe, but the road was so bad that the journey took well over 2 hours. At various points our car was overtaken by cyclists who could avoid the massive pot holes and ruts in the dirt road. Nevertheless, it was a joy to be asked to speak at a village Church of simple mud and thatch construction. Despite being founded only 4 years ago, there were 50 – 60 people present and the building was packed.

On Thursday 8 May we set off early for Lusaka airport. I was carrying back to the UK over 600 copies of “Authority of God” in French that had been printed in Kabwe, for later distribution in other parts of Congo, Burundi and Tanzania (God willing). However, my calculations of my baggage weight were not accurate, so I had the embarrassment of re-packing my bags and hand-luggage at the check-in desk. However, through God’s providence all the books were carried without extra charge and were brought safely back to the UK awaiting later despatch. After the 27 hour journey home, I can record God’s grace and faithfulness.

For more information about Free Grace Evangelistic Association (FGEA), see www.freegrace-ea.org

“The same line of proof which establishes that Christ is the promised Messiah, conversely applied, establishes that the Roman system is the predicted Apostasy.

In the life of Christ, we behold the CONVERSE of what Antichrist must be; and in the prophecy of the Antichrist we are shown the CONVERSE of what Christ must be - and was.

And when we place the Papacy between the two, and compare it with each, we find, on the one hand, that it is the perfect CONVERSE of Christ as seen in His life; and on the other, that it is the perfect image of the Antichrist, as shown in the prophecy of him.

WE CONCLUDE, THEREFORE, THAT IF JESUS OF NAZARETH BE THE CHRIST, THE ROMAN PAPACY IS THE ANTICHRIST.”

Dr. J. A. Wylie

NEWS ITEMS

1. Stornoway church worshippers walk out after row over gay ministers STV (www.news.stv.tv/highlands-islands) 19 May, 2014

Around 250 people from Stornoway High left the national Church over its “continuing departure from Biblical teaching”. The members have joined a Free Church congregation which worships in a primary school in Stornoway.

Stornoway High members first discussed a split after the Church of Scotland voted to allow gay men and women to become Ministers.

The announcement came at the beginning of the Free Church General Assembly in Edinburgh on 19th May.

Former Stornoway High Session clerk, Christopher Martin said: “Sadly our congregation could simply not identify with the general direction the Church of Scotland is headed in and the sensible option was to leave.”

Inverness Free Church Minister, Rev. David Meredith, is now Chairman of a working group set up to deal with requests from congregations to join the Free Church.

Mr. Meredith added: “We are conscious that the process of disengagement from the Church of Scotland has been a painful experience but we hope we can offer a home which presents a Biblical vision for contemporary Scotland. (Abbreviated)

2. Pope’s Prayer for Peace at Wailing Wall - Daily Mail 27 May, 2014

Pope Francis put politics aside as he visited the Wailing Wall on the final day of his pilgrimage of the Holy Land. The Pontiff bowed his head in prayer as he placed the words of ‘Our Father’ in the cracks of the wall in Jerusalem, one of the holiest sites in Judaism, where millions of messages are left each year.

During the three-day trip, Pope Francis managed to persuade Palestinian leader Mahoud Abbas and Israeli President Shimon Peres to agree to travel to the Vatican next month for talks. But he also sparked controversy by wading into the fragile Middle East peace process. He was accused of meddling after he met with President Abbas and called for a Palestinian state to be fully established.

And controversially, he visited the so-called separation wall which divides Israel from the West Bank. The wall is a highly emotive flashpoint because it apparently encroaches on Palestinian territory, while Israelis argue it protects its citizens from terrorists. The Pope also met with Holocaust survivors at the Yad Vashem memorial.

3. The Gospel Magazine Annual Resolution 2014 – submitted by Philip Lievesley, Secretary and Treasurer

“In the light of the Prime Minister’s recent affirmation that this is still a Christian country, this Annual General Meeting of the Trustees of The Gospel Magazine at 184 Fleet Street, London on 2nd May, 2014 calls upon Her Majesty’s Government to promote no further erosion of our Christian heritage through any relaxation of the Sunday Trading Laws.”

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

(Matthew 18: 21-35)

Dr. Alan C. Clifford
Norwich Reformed Church

Introduction

No-one can deny the devastating effects of sin in human experience. Besides the rupture in our relationship with God, sin has ruined human relationships. Even those who reject the Christian view would admit that much human misery indicates some serious flaw in human nature. The anti-social streak in us means that we all cause and suffer some mistreatment from time to time. When we offend each other, we hurt each other with varying degrees of damage. The old saying 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me' is simply not true. Verbal violence often inflicts permanent mental and emotional scars in a wicked world of international, terrorist and domestic conflict.

If we are to enjoy any happiness in this life, how to handle this mutually-inflicted misery is a challenge we cannot ignore. Thus offending and offensive sinners cannot do without the message at the heart of the Gospel: we all need forgiveness, both from God and each other. Significantly, when our Lord Jesus Christ taught the disciples how to pray, the one petition He explained more fully was the one about forgiveness: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (Matt. 6: 14-15).

1. UNLIMITED MERCY (v. 21-22)

A question from the Apostle Peter led to a lengthy parable on the issue of forgiveness: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Perhaps impetuous Peter thought he was being generous! On the contrary, Jesus replied, "I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven." Of course, our Lord is not specifying a quantity response but a quality response towards others. What He is opposing is the self-centred 'I-have-my-rights' mentality. Despite insults and other provocations, we must be ready to show a merciful and forgiving disposition. As J. C. Ryle puts it: 'We are to bear much, and put up with much, rather than quarrel. We are to look over much, and submit to much, rather than have any strife. We are to lay aside everything like malice, strife, revenge and retaliation. Such feelings are...utterly unworthy of a disciple of Christ' (*Expository Thoughts*). Needless to say, the world would be a happier place if this teaching were to be taken to heart and applied. Instead, we have an increasingly litigious society where every wrong has a price and every offender must pay up!

Some will object that kind and decent people would be trampled on by unscrupulous villains if we followed this teaching. We should, however, remember that our Lord is speaking of personal affronts rather than offences against the law of the land. He is not dismissing social order and the need for lawyers (see Matthew 23: 23). It is not 'loving one's neighbour' to allow crime to go unpunished and criminals to offend with impunity (see Romans 13: 1-10). No, our Lord is urging us to avoid the instinctive 'tit-for-tat' tendency of human nature. Our first response to a provocation should be conciliatory rather than confrontational, restrained rather than retaliatory. It takes two to quarrel. Accordingly, as Paul reminds us: 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men...Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good' (Rom. 12: 18-21).

2. CONDITIONAL MERCY (v. 23-27)

Having replied to Peter, the Lord Jesus re-inforces the point with the parable of the unforgiving servant. We learn of a King whose servant owed him ten thousand talents. Unable to pay and,

together with his family and possessions, threatened with being sold to another master to recoup the debt, the servant pleaded, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Happily for him, his master was gracious and generous: "Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt' (v. 27). Our Lord's words shed light on a much neglected and misunderstood aspect of forgiveness. It is always conditional on repentance.

How frequently have traumatised victims of terrorist atrocities been interviewed and asked, "Do you forgive them?" Such a ridiculous question ignores equity in human relations. In the parable, the master only forgives the servant's debt in the face of penitential pleading. Under no circumstances is Christ urging masters to forgive without repentance. God doesn't even do that. Neither are we expected to do so. This point is clarified in Luke's Gospel: "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (Luke 17: 3). Consistent with the point of the parable, Jesus then says, "And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17: 4). That said, it is vital to distinguish between actual forgiveness and a forgiving disposition. While an unwillingness to repent on the part of the offender makes pardon a non-event, the person offended should avoid bitterness and be disposed willingly to forgive at the least sign of penitence.

3. ABUSED MERCY (v. 28-34)

The second half of the parable links our forgiving of others with the forgiveness we hope for from God. The forgiven servant is himself owed a hundred denarii by a fellow servant. Instead of being as generous as his master, he violently demands payment there and then. Despite a desperate request for time, the fellow servant is thrown into prison by the pardoned servant. Distressed at this wicked injustice, other servants tell the master about his servant's cruelty. In righteous indignation, the master challenges his pardoned servant: "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Justice then took its course. The ungracious and unforgiving servant was consigned to the torturers for just punishment. He who does not forgive will not be forgiven. In this way, Jesus highlights the forgiveness we all need at God's hands.

4. DIVINE MERCY (v. 35)

Since our sins against God are infinitely worse than our sins against one another, how ready we should be to forgive! Indeed, the two debts cleverly compared by Christ illustrate this very clearly. While one servant owed another 100 denarii (the Roman silver coin = a day's wages in New Testament times (see Matt. 20: 2) = £30-40 sterling today?), the first servant owed his master 10,000 talents (= 60 million denarii)! 'One debt...could be carried in [a] pocket; for the payment of the other, an army of nearly 8600 carriers, each with a sack of [27 kgs] in weight would be required. If these were placed in single file, [about a metre] apart, the [line of sacks] would be [8 kms] in length!' (*Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*). In this way, Jesus is seeking to impress us with the enormity of our sins against the good and holy God who will call us all to account. As Ryle again says, 'Our neighbours offences against us are mere trifles, compared with our offences against God' (*Expository Thoughts*).

According to the Apostle Paul, it is the Gospel of God's mercy that should inspire our forgiving of others: 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you' (Eph. 4: 31-32). The urgency of this teaching cannot be overstated: 'In forgiving others, we resemble God. It was Adam's pride to resemble God in knowledge; it is lawful to resemble God in forgiveness. What is godliness if not 'God-likeness'?...A man may as well go to Hell for not forgiving as for not believing' (*Thomas Watson*).

If we wish to enjoy God's mercy and pardon, may we not harbour resentment and bitterness towards others, even if they do not actually repent. Severe judgement threatens hard hearts. Our Saviour's warning is clear and solemn: 'So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses' (v. 35). If we remain conscious of our own sins, we are more likely to forgive others. 'We ought to forgive ourselves little - and others much' (*Robert Leighton*). May the hymn writer, Charles Wesley's, humility always be ours:

Depth of mercy! can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?

GOD REVEALED IN HIS NAMES

JEHOVAH JIREH! He'll provide:
No harm shall reach thee near His side,
'Your Father knoweth all your need,'
Before you at His footstool plead:
Nor can a mother's pity be
More tender than is His to thee. (*Genesis 22:14*)

JEHOVAH SHALOM! He is peace;
His voice shall bid the tempest cease;
And on thy soul a calm shall be
As deep as once o'er Galilee. (*Judges 6:24*)

JEHOVAH SHAMMAH! God is there,
Where'er we cast on Him our care;
Nor need we climb the mountain's brow
To worship and before Him bow;
If thy heart seek Him, He is nigh
To wipe the tear and hush the sigh. (*Ezekiel 48:35*)

JEHOVAH ROPHI! God will heal,
And all thy heart's deep yearnings feel:
His Word reveals Him thus to be,
The LORD; "the LORD that healeth thee!" (*Exodus 15:26*)

JEHOVAH TSIDKENU! He'll bless,
And feel for thee in thy distress;
He is "THE LORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!" (*Jeremiah 23: 6, 33:16*)

JEHOVAH NISSI'S name shall be
Our banner borne to victory:
The gathering nations round it sing.
And own Him Lord - of kings the King;
'All flesh shall His salvation see'
And low before Him bend the knee! (*Exodus 17:15*)

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