

# CHRISTIAN WATCH

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**'And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.'**

Mark 13:37



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Let us mark what a striking picture our Lord draws of the religion of the man who not only hears Christ's sayings but does Christ's Will (Luke 6:47-48). He compares him to one who "*built a house, and digged deep and laid the foundation on a rock.*" Such a man's religion may cost him much. Like the house built on a rock, it may entail pain, labour and self-denial. To lay aside pride and self-righteousness, to crucify the rebellious flesh, to put on the mind of Christ, to take up the cross daily, to count all things but loss for Christ's sake – all this may be hard work; but, like the house built on the rock, such religion will stand. The streams of affliction may beat violently upon it and the floods of persecution dash fiercely against it, but it will not give way. The Christianity which combines good profession and good practice is a building that will not fall.

***J. C. Ryle***

## **I AM NOT WHAT I ONCE WAS**

I am not what I ought to be. Ah, how imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor that which is evil and I would cleave to that which is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon shall I put off mortality and with mortality all sin and imperfection. Yet, though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be, I can surely say, I am not what I once was – a slave to sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the Apostle and acknowledge that by the grace of God I am what I am.

***John Newton***

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(Some articles may not necessarily reflect the opinions and beliefs of Christian Watch but are included for information only and not as an endorsement.)

May/June 2026

CHRISTIAN WATCH

*Dear Friends,*

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

Since our last Newsletter, a whole swathe of new politicians have been elected. The question must now be asked – is it for the better? Well, in Scotland, many of the new politicians gathered at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh - from where John Knox famously led the Scottish Reformation and transformed it into a major Protestant centre – for the ‘kirking’ of Parliament, marking the beginning of a new Parliamentary session. Sadly, how times have changed! The politicians listened to a Quranic sermon with the request that – and I quote – “Allah accept this small effort to share the beauty and urgency of his revealed guidance. When you judge between the people, judge with justice” (Quran 4:58). In Islam, this means that rulers must govern to Allah’s law (Sharia) – not Scottish law, not democracy and not with Western values. So the newly elected politicians have just received their instructions from the Quran – inside a Christian Cathedral! Will they obey it? Scotland, wake up! (N.B. See the News Item concerning King Charles III and Ramadan in this Newsletter).

A Report from the Climate Change Committee has claimed that the British way of life is under threat from climate change. By 2050, heatwaves ‘could’ regularly exceed 40 degrees centigrade. Record hot summers (like 2025) will be the norm; there will be a growing flood risk, with 10 million properties at risk from flooding; storms will have stronger winds; summers will be drier – leading to drought and water shortages and heat-related deaths ‘could’ rise to 10,000 per year. Sir David Attenborough has given his highly influential support to the Committee’s claims. One is greatly tempted to sum it all up in

one word – baloney!

At the time of writing, Sir Keir Starmer still remains Prime Minister, though plottings against him from within his own Labour Party continue unabated. One of his MPs – Samantha Niblett – has launched a ‘summer of sex’ campaign with a lady who runs a pornography subscription platform aimed at children from 0 to 18. Yes, you read that correctly! It is her idea also to bring ‘sex toys’ into Parliament. So what is this really all about? Quite simply, the intention is to destroy marriage and remove fathers and mothers (normal parenting) from the lives of children. Statistics indicate that from 400,000 UK marriages in 1973, the most recent figure is now under 225,000. Marriage is the life-long union of one man to one woman and our nation – indeed, all nations – are stronger when marriage is promoted.

*(More information on this subject can be obtained from ‘Coalition for Marriage’ - [www.c4m.org.uk](http://www.c4m.org.uk)).*

We live in dark days but the Lord is in control and nothing takes Him by surprise. I have been reading recently a couple of books on the lives of the Covenanters in Scotland – particularly the life story of Rev. James Renwick entitled “He Counted Me Worthy”. As he went to the scaffold in those killing times, he stated – “Ye that are the people of God, do not weary in maintaining the testimony of the day, in your stations and places; and, whatever ye do, make sure an interest in Christ, for there is a storm coming that shall try your foundation. And you that are strangers to God, break off your sins by repentance.” Lord, answer this prayer!

Yours in His service,

*Ian Henderson*

Ian R. Henderson (Chairman)

# IGNORANCE OF FUTURITY

**Christopher Sturm**

(1740 – 1786)

If it is our fate to be ignorant to future events, we must not merely trace the cause to the narrow and limited faculties of the soul in its present state of existence, but we must go further, till we arrive at the Creator Himself, whose Will and pleasure it is that the knowledge of futurity should be denied us. He knew the strength of man and the extent of knowledge his imperfect nature was capable of bearing. The knowledge of futurity, like the splendour of the noonday sun, could not be steadily contemplated; it would be fatal to the happiness of man – and dangerous to his virtue.

Supposing that the future events of our life marked a bright and prosperous tract; whilst we viewed this at a distance and anticipated that happiness which we knew certainly awaited us, our present enjoyment could cease, we should no longer be contented and cheerful but wait in impatient anxiety for those blessings which were held up to our view. On the contrary, was the prospect of future contingencies gloomy and marked by affliction and sufferings, the moment we read our fate, our happiness would be no more; the days which hitherto had been passed in peace and tranquillity would now rise in sorrow and depart in gloom. With a known evil impending over our heads, each morning bringing us nearer to the dread moment, we should live in hopeless misery, the prey of sorrow and despair, insensible of all the blessings around us.

How infinitely merciful and wise then is that God who has shrouded futurity in darkness, gradually unfolding the veil as the events occur; so that we are never at once overwhelmed by the torrent of adversity, nor confounded by the blaze of certain prosperity! Let us then never suffer ourselves to be disappointed by the delusive hopes of

happiness, nor be rendered miserable and wretched by feeling the weight of misfortunes before they arrive. Let us rather thank the Almighty that our ignorance of futurity saves us from many a pang of inquietude and delivers us from many a throb of anxious dread and fearful despondence.

If we feel assured of the grace of God through the mediation of Christ, we have just reason to hope that futurity will unfold to us with joy and gladness - and as there is a just and gracious God, who orders and directs the universe, who knows all the events of our lives - and before whose view is continually present the circle of eternity - we may with safety, when we lie down to sleep, commend ourselves to His care, undisturbed as to what may happen during the night - and when the morning sun summons us to our duties, we may trust ourselves in His protection, without anxiety for the events which are to befall us during the day. Also, in the hour of trial, when dangers threaten and destruction seems to impend, let us still remember the goodness of God and repose upon His protecting arm, in perfect assurance that whatever happens is for our good.

*Previously published on the 'New Focus' magazine website:  
<https://Go-newfocus.co.uk>*



# TRUE RELIGION

J. C. Philpot

*“And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee”*

(Psalm 39:7)

True religion is a very simple thing. Simplicity is stamped upon all the works of God – and especially upon the work of grace. The more genuine, therefore, our religion is, the more simple it will be. To be simple is to be child-like and to be child-like is to have that mind and spirit without which no man can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Can we, then, with this child-like simplicity, walk step by step here with David and follow him throughout? Can we put our seal to these things and say - “Lord, what wait I for?” Is your religion brought into this narrow point? “Truly, my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation.”



“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.” Such a frame of soul is indeed from the hand of God, for no man ever did, or could, bring himself into it.

If we can enter into one part of these Heavenly breathings, we shall be able also to enter into the others and say - “My hope is in Thee.” Feeling the weight and burden of sin, we shall be constrained to cry -

“Deliver me from all my transgressions” - and feeling our own weakness and the evil of our hearts, we shall add - “Make me not the reproach of the foolish.” If then, we can sincerely, before God, employ these petitions, may we not ask who produced them? Who wrought this experience in the soul? From whose hands did it come? Surely, surely, the same Lord that taught David must have taught us; the same power that wrought in him must have wrought in us, before we could, in sweet experience, enter into this feeling language and adopt it as our own.

Here, therefore, we see a little of what true religion is; here we see what are the genuine breathings of a child-like spirit and what is the experience of a man of God - and it will be our mercy if we can see in his experience a sweet counterpart of our own.

From: *Through Baca's Vale* – Daily Portions

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Lord, if Thou Thy grace impart,  
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,  
I shall, as my Master, be  
Rooted in humility.

Simple, teachable and mild,  
Changed into a little child;  
Pleased with all the Lord provides;  
Weaned from all the world besides.

Father, fix my soul on Thee;  
Every evil let me flee;  
Nothing want, beneath, above –  
Happy in Thy precious love.

(Gadsby's Hymn 1058)

# DISCERNMENT IN AFFLICTION

**Pooyan Mehrshahi**

Pastor, Providence Baptist Chapel, Cheltenham

There are times when a true Christian is brought very low and begins to ask – “What is this that is happening to me? Is the Lord chastening me or am I simply passing through temptation, bodily weakness, mental strain or the ordinary sorrows of this fallen world?” That question must be handled carefully. If answered badly, the bruised reed may be crushed. If ignored, the careless soul may remain hard.

I hope through these thoughts I can give you some help. So let us begin where we must begin.

## **Can God be angry with His children?**

Yes, but not as a judge with criminals. If a man is in Christ, God will never punish him with condemning wrath. Never. That wrath has already fallen on the Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 8:1). The curse has been borne. The sentence has been executed. Christ has stood in the law-place of His people.

But can God be displeased with His children, rebuke them, correct them and chasten them? Most certainly. “*For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth*” (Heb. 12:6). The very passage that comforts the Christian also humbles him. The Lord does not indulge His children. He trains them.

The word used in Hebrews 12 for chastening is *paideia*, the discipline, instruction and correction of a child. This is not the prison-yard, but the schoolroom. This is not penal wrath, but fatherly discipline. Samuel Bolton states the distinction with great precision in his book, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*. What comes upon the believer is not ‘penal, arising from vindictive justice, but medicinal, arising from a fatherly love’; it is ‘his

medicine, not his punishment; his chastisement, not his sentence; his correction, not His condemnation.<sup>1</sup> That is the point to hold firmly. The judge's sword has fallen on Christ. The Father's rod remains for His children.

C. H. Spurgeon captured the same truth with one unforgettable line. Speaking on Lazarus, he says - 'The man who the Lord loves is sick.'<sup>2</sup> There is the shock to our flesh. Loved, yet laid low. Loved, yet cast into the furnace. Loved, yet weeping in the dark. Yes. The Lord's love and the Lord's chastening are not opposites.

### **Not every affliction is a rebuke for some particular sin.**

Here many tender believers make shipwreck.

Every pain is not a secret message saying - 'You have committed this particular sin and now God is striking you for it.' Job's friends reasoned like that and they spoke grievously without knowledge. 'Not all the afflictions which God brings upon us to exercise us are for sin. Some are inflicted for the prevention of sin...some for the trial of graces' (Bolton)<sup>3</sup>.

A godly mother, worn down by months of nursing a sick child or other family member, begins to tremble inwardly and says - 'Surely God is against me;' but that may be entirely wrong. Her affliction may not be a rod for some specific offence. It may be a furnace to refine faith, to detach her from self-confidence and to drive her more wholly to the Lord.

Yet the opposite error is just as dangerous. A man becomes prayerless, sharp-tempered, worldly and secretive. He neglects the Word, wounds his conscience and resists reproof. Then the Lord touches his comforts and makes his path bitter. In such a case, why should he hide behind confusion or uncertainty? The hand of God may be very plain.

### **How then may we discern the Lord's chastening?**

First, ask, **is there some known sin being tolerated?** Not imagined sin only, but known sin. Is there pride? Bitterness? Secret uncleanness?

Discontentment? Covetousness? Neglect of prayer? Love of the world? Harshness in the home? If conscience already points to the wound, do not demand a sign from Heaven. Repent.

Second, ask, **what is this trial uncovering?** Thomas Brooks says afflictions ‘draw out the core of pride, the core of self-love, the core of earthliness, the core of formality, the core of hypocrisy.’<sup>4</sup> Afflictions often act like a fire under a vessel. What lies hidden rises to the top.

A businessman loses a contract and suddenly becomes resentful, hard and restless. What has happened? The trial may not itself have been sent for specific sin, yet it has exposed an idol. Reputation, control, success and self-importance were living where God alone should sit.

Third, ask, **is this driving me toward God or away from Him?**

Satan accuses in order to estrange the soul from God. The Spirit convicts in order to bring the soul back to God. The Devil says - ‘There is no hope for you.’ The Lord says - “Return unto me.” These fatherly chastisements proceed ‘from love displeased, from love offended,’ yet their aim is ‘fuller embraces.’<sup>5</sup> The Lord sometimes wounds so that He may heal more deeply.



Fourth, ask, **is there fruit?** *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby”* (Heb. 12:11). Not merely struck by it, but exercised by it. God’s purposes can be summarised in afflicting believers as humbling them, exposing sin, purging corruption, drawing them near, conforming them to Christ, increasing faith, enlarging joy and weaning them from the world.<sup>6</sup> Affliction ‘weans their

affection from things below and fixes them on Himself' and 'cuts the threads one by one that bind their wavering hearts to earth.'<sup>17</sup>

### **Errors that must be rejected.**

One error says - 'Every painful inward experience is a sign of God's anger.' That bruises tender consciences.

Another says - 'Since Christ died for me, God never deals sharply with me now.' That makes light of holiness.

A modern charismatic error often says that prolonged affliction proves deficient faith, wrong confession or failure to claim healing or victory. That is miserable counsel for wounded saints. It leaves them either pretending or despairing. Scripture speaks more truthfully and more pastorally: "*whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth*" (Heb. 12:6).

### **What then should the Christian do?**

Search your ways. "*Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord*" (Lamentations 3:40).

Confess known sin plainly and particularly. Vague confession is often only polite concealment. Go at once to Christ. Do not stare only at your pain. The child under the rod must not run from the Father, but to Him through the Son.

Use the means of grace more, not less. When the soul has no appetite, it most needs food. Make gathering for worship and being in fellowship with God's people a must...and do not wait until you feel better.

Seek wise pastoral counsel if your judgment is clouded. A tender conscience may accuse itself of everything. A sleepy conscience may accuse itself of nothing.

### **A final word to the tender and to the careless.**

To the tender soul, trembling under inward trials, do not quickly conclude that God has turned against you. The cloud may be dark, but it is still under His command. The fire may be hot, but it is still measured by a Father's wisdom. If you are Christ's, there is no wrath in it.

To the careless soul, do not misuse grace. Do not make the cross you carry an excuse for spiritual laziness, coldness, compromise or secret sin. The God who justifies His people also sanctifies them...and He knows how to make sin bitter to His own children.



And to both, remember this above all: if you are in Christ, the hand that falls on you is never the hand of a condemning judge. It is your Father's hand. Painful? Yes. Mysterious? Often. Vindictive? Never. If He uses the fire, it is because He means the gold to shine. If He lays on the rod, it is because He has not given you over and if He bring you low, it is that He may bring you nearer. Blessed is that trial which empties us of self and drives us afresh to Christ.

From: [pooyanmehreshahi@substack.com](mailto:pooyanmehreshahi@substack.com)

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (London, 1645), chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> C. H Spurgeon, in *Comfort in Affliction* (Chapel Library), on John 11:3.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, chapter 4

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Brooks, in *Comfort in Affliction* (Chapel Library)

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Bolton, in *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, chapter 4

<sup>6</sup> Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Essentials of Reformed Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025) chapter 37.

<sup>7</sup> J. C. Ryle, in *Comfort in Affliction* (Chapel Library).

## UNCHANGEABLE JESUS

Unchangeable Jesus, Thy praises we sing  
And own Thee our Prophet, our Priest, and our King;  
Oh, give us while singing sweet tastes of Thy love,  
To raise our affections to treasures above.

Unchangeable Jesus, our waverings we own,  
Acknowledge, with sorrow, our sins at Thy throne:  
We surely should perish, so changing are we,  
But that Thy free favour is firm as is free.

Unchangeable Jesus, oh, teach us at length,  
In no way to lean on our wisdom and strength:  
Since, moon-like, our graces now wax and now wane,  
But, sun-like, Thy favour is ever the same.

Unchangeable Jesus, in whom we'd confide,  
Thy sunshine of goodness does ever abide:  
Oh, give us on Thee and Thy promise to lean,  
And trust Thou art shining when clouds intervene.

Unchangeable Jesus, the day will soon come  
When all Thy dear loved ones shall see Thee at home  
Oh, then may our voices add strength to the song  
That rolls through long ages Thy praises along!

*Septimus Sears*

## NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

### **God has answered our prayers against the Assisted Suicide Bill** British Church Newspaper, 4 May, 2026

Can there be any doubt at all that our most gracious God and Father has not only heard our prayers against the Assisted Dying Bill, but has clearly answered them?

Last year, Kim Leadbeater in the Commons and Lord Falconer in the Lords were jubilant when, on the Bill's Second Reading, the Bill was passed with a healthy majority of 55 votes. A similar Bill in Scotland looked destined to succeed.

Last year the Isle of Man – and this year Jersey – passed Assisted Dying Bills, posting them off to the Ministry of Justice in the expectation they would soon be rubber-stamped with the Royal Assent.

Yet each of these Bills has run into the sand, at least for a while.

Now opinion pollsters are telling us that the public mood is shifting away from bringing in legalised suicide.

**Let us give thanks for these reprieves – and pray on, ever more fervently.**



## **“A fight for the soul of the country”**

Voice for Justice UK Newsletter, 18 May, 2026

On 16<sup>th</sup> May, central London saw two marches: the so-called hard-right Unite the Kingdom March, led by Tommy Robinson and the Pro-Palestine Nakba Day Rally to commemorate the displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israel war.

According to Sir Keir Starmer, organisers of the former march were nothing more than peddlers of hatred and division, seeking to incite violence – and he threatened them with the full force of the law. We are, he said, in “a fight for the soul of the country.” He was apparently not alone in this assessment. Ahead of the march, His Majesty’s Government took the decision to block entry into the UK of eleven of the scheduled Unite speakers travelling from overseas, on the grounds that they were far-right agitators and enemies of the British people.



Sir Keir Starmer was unquestionably right – we are in a battle for the soul of the nation; but the question is, whose side is he, and His Majesty’s Government, on?

It is certainly true that all eleven of the banned speakers, such as Belgian politician, Filip Dewinter, are opposed to illegal immigration and the ever-growing Islamisation of our culture, while Dutch political activist Eva Vkaardingerbroek has spoken out vehemently against sexual abuse and the worryingly high number of rapes committed by illegal immigrants on young girls of the indigenous population; but none of them appear to have issued calls for violent harm or disorder. And why is it

so-called 'far right' activists are labelled such extreme enemies of the State, while a similar point – with seemingly far better reason – is not made about pro-Palestinian activists, who really are calling for the slaughter of Jews and for Israel to be wiped off the face of the map? How is it that that's okay, but expressing support for Christian belief and values and the rights of the indigenous white population, isn't?

As it is, many protestors on the pro-Palestine Nakba Day march ostentatiously carried Palestine flags, while chanting 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,' which is generally taken as encouragement to exterminate the entire Jewish race – and has most certainly contributed to the horrifying rise in anti-Semitism now evident in the country. A sentiment echoed by other protestors on the march, who while not going so far as to call for the mass slaughter of Jews, carried anti-Semitic placards decorated with a red inverted triangle, generally seen as expressing support for the banned terror group Hamas.



By contrast, on the Unite March – composed, as Keir Starmer claims, of thugs and vicious extremists – there were no such violent threats. On the contrary, there was simply a sea of waving Union Jack and St. George flags, all expressing pride in England and support for our Christian heritage, along with worship songs and an altar call from the main stage for people to accept Christ.

How is it then that Keir Starmer can express such condemnation and loathing for Unite Britain supporters, branding them enemies of the State – but have no word of criticism for advocates of Islam who, in their expressions of hatred for Israel and the entire Jewish people, really are peddling violence and racist division? How is this okay?

Multi-culturalism is all very well if incomers willingly commit to assimilation in the host culture; but, as is becoming all too obvious, Islam doesn't. Rather, Muslims demand that our culture first 'accepts' and then submits to their belief system and way of life. The recent attempt to introduce a definition of anti-Muslim hatred, branded Islamophobia, is manifestation of that. Though marketed as a tool to combat discrimination and hostility, the reality is that the regulations promote and embed the interests of a sub-culture, which subordinate the well-being and rights of ordinary British citizens to conflicting Muslim demands. In practice, anything that calls into question the artificial narrative of multi-culturalism and imposed diversity is then condemned as racism and bigotry – which can mean only that, longer-term, the interests of the indigenous population will become even more subordinated to the countervailing demands of Islam and calls for submission to Allah. An instance of which, polygamy, though banned under UK law, already seems to be finding increasing acceptance, while Britain is seen as both the Western capital for Sharia courts and the Western hub for Islamic finance.

It is this spreading Islamic dominance that Keir Starmer is promoting, when he condemns those who call for the recovery of British identity and value. Such an approach can serve only further to destroy our culture. The Prime Minister is entirely right when he says that we are in a battle for the soul of the nation.

But, as said above, the question is, which side is he on?

**CW Comment:** Israel, in Deuteronomy 28, were promised blessings if they were obedient to the Lord's commandments, but warned of the curses they would receive if they were disobedient. Our nation has

been singularly used and blessed by the Lord and favoured with a Christian heritage, but how, over the years, we have turned our backs on Him - and by our legislation have said - "We will not have this Man to reign over us." The Lord has been so longsuffering and patient with us, but can we not see even in the above article the beginning of the fulfilment of the 'curse' concerning strangers?

*"The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail."* (verses 43-44).

## **King Charles under attack for issuing goodwill messages for Ramadan and Eid, but none to Christians at Easter**

British Church Newspaper, 4 May, 2026

At the beginning of this year's fast of Ramadan (evening of 17th February) and at the end of the festival of Eid al-Fitr (evening of 19th March), King Charles made speeches celebrating the religion of Islam, which he has often referred to as 'a religion of peace.'

The month of Ramadan and the Islamic fast of Eid move back 10 or 11 days each year relative to the Gregorian (solar) calendar. This year it came close to Easter, with Good Friday on 3rd April and Easter Sunday on 5th April.

Many, having seen the King making



televised addresses celebrating Ramadan and Eid, could not understand why he did not do the same for 'our' Easter.

One Royal commentator, Ian Pelham Turner, said – 'This was an easy way for Charles to start another scandal overseas. How do you turn a Royal drama into a crisis? Simply do not follow decades of tradition and decide not to write an Easter message, even though King Charles is Head of the Church and swore an oath at his Coronation to uphold the faith.'

Neil Sean, a Royal commentator for *Maycon Productions*, said this was a 'mis-step' for the monarchy – 'at a time when there are tensions over the further evolution of Islam here - and the belief of many that Charles is a closet Muslim.'

In some ways, Charles has been criticised unfairly, since his mother, Queen Elizabeth, only ever gave one televised Easter broadcast – on 11th April, 2020, three weeks after the Covid panic was launched. However, Charles has accelerated his love for Ramadan since becoming King, issuing a 'good-will' video message to Muslims marking Ramadan 2025 and even hosting an Eid 'Iftar' meal at Windsor Castle, inviting 400 Muslim guests.

Charles' fascination with Islam goes back a long way. He has literally attended dozens of Islamic and Muslim-focused events for well over 30 years and has been called 'the most pro-Islam monarch in British history.'



*Abbreviated*

# A SOLEMN FAST

**John Calvin**  
on the Book of Joel

The prophet threatens for the purpose of correcting the indifference of the people, who were very tardy to consider God's judgments. The object is to make the people sensible that it was now no time for taking rest; for the Lord, having long tolerated their wickedness, was now resolved to pour upon them in full torrent His whole fury.

*“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble”* (Joel 2:1). The prophet begins with an exhortation. We know, indeed, that he alludes to the usual custom sanctioned by the law; for as on festivals trumpets were sounded to call the people, so also it was done when anything extraordinary happened. Hence the prophet addresses not each individually, but as all had done wickedly from the least to the greatest, he bids the whole assembly to be called that they might in common own themselves to be guilty before God and deprecate His vengeance. It is the same as though the prophet had said that there was no one among the people who could exempt himself from blame, for iniquity had prevailed through the whole body.

This shows that when any judgment of God is impending and tokens of it appear, this remedy ought to be used: that all must publicly assemble and confess themselves worthy of punishment and, at the same time, flee to the mercy of God. This, we know, was formerly enjoined on the people; and this practice has not been abolished by the Gospel. It hence appears, therefore, how

much we have departed from the right and lawful order of things; for at this day it would be new and unusual to proclaim a fast. How so? Because the greater part are become hardened; and as they know not commonly what repentance is, so they understand not what the profession of repentance means; for they understand not what sin is, what the wrath of God is, what grace is. It is then no wonder that they are so secure and that when praying for pardon is mentioned, it is a thing wholly unknown at this day.

He bids the inhabitants of the land to tremble. By these words he intimates that we are not to trifle with God by vain ceremonies, but to deal with Him in earnest. When, therefore, the trumpets sound, our hearts ought to tremble; and thus the reality is to be connected with the outward signs. And this ought to be carefully noticed; for the world is ever disposed to have an eye to some outward service and thinks that a satisfaction is given to God when some external rite is observed, but we do nothing but mock God when we present Him with ceremonies while there is no corresponding sincere feeling in the heart.

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*The glory of the Gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.*

*Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones*

# SIGHING FOR REALITY

George Whitbread

*“All her people sigh”* (Lamentations 1:11)

These words apply first literally to Jerusalem which, at this time, was in a very low state. She had turned her back to God and would not hearken to the warnings that He sent by the prophets. Jeremiah tells us in this chapter some of the things that made him weep (v. 16) and no doubt the bitterest of them was the fact that the people were bent on backsliding. You know the history of Israel and some of you can see your own history in that account too. The Lord told Moses that He had chosen the people not because they were a great nation, or obedient, but because He *would*. May the Holy Ghost reveal that to each one! It was His purpose in eternity and, therefore, is unalterable. “The cause of love is in Himself” says the hymn – and when the soul is in the eternal love of God, it cannot ever be out of it.

These words apply also to God’s people, His spiritual Israel. No doubt there are some of you here who have many fears when you hear or read anything about God’s people. You wonder whether you are one and fear lest something will be said that you won’t be able to go with, so proving that you are outside the number. Many things cause these fears (and these fears, though trying, are wholesome). One reason for these fears is that you don’t wish to be deceived or to deceive others. You want to speak, in your measure, as one who said that he spoke of the things that he had “tasted, handled and felt.” You try to beg of the Lord not to let you say you are something that you are not. Another cause is the fear of presumption. You can say with David - “Keep back Thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.” Then, too, you get into such places sometimes that you feel that nobody can be quite like you or walk in

quite the same way...and the Devil then suggests that you are out of the secret.

Some people's religion begins in joy. God says it shall end in weeping; but the religion of God's people begins in sighing and it **will** end in rejoicing. This is the religion I want; no other will do. You cannot have union with the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" if you know nothing of sighing. When here on earth, we are told He sighed over the blind man and over Jerusalem. The Word of God tells us that the dead know not anything. *The dead are never known to sigh.* Oh what an evidence of life it is if you are brought to sigh! If you walk in a cemetery at midnight, you will hear nothing but your own breath, because you are in the place of the dead – no sighing there; but if you go to our hospital and walk at midnight through the various wards, one and another are sighing. So in grace. The babe sighs for a sense of pardon. It sighs after Jesus and longs to know the substance of this: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Those who hope they have known the mercy of the Lord sigh for fresh tokens. They desire to bless the Lord for His help and mercy in the past, but they cannot rely on these. It may be that some of you have been sighing all the week and have come to chapel sighing. Your language is:

"Show me some token, Lord, for good,  
Some token of Thy special love;  
Show me that I am born of God,  
And that my treasure is above."

But oh! the Lord appears for these sighers. He does indeed. He says - "*For the sighing of the needy now will I arise, saith the Lord, I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.*" He says also - "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow" (of course you have because of sin in you),

“but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice.”

But, whatever the state or condition of these sighers, the Lord **does** come to them. He has said that they that mourn are blessed and that they **shall** be comforted – and when He comes, where are your sighs then? Where are all your fears then?

We read in Ezekiel that the Lord was about to send vengeance upon the people for their sins, but that there were some whom the Lord’s messengers were to be careful to preserve and so they were to put a mark upon them “that sigh and cry for the abominations done in the midst.” O that we might sigh and cry for the abominations done in England! But let us come closer and look each of us at our own land, our own heart. As He leads us from one chamber of imagery to another, what abominations we see! How they make us sigh! There is the abomination of unbelief. It is indeed an abomination. It is easy to say a few words in prayer before God when our path is smooth and clear, but when trials come and God’s dealing with us are mysterious and distasteful to the flesh, then it is another matter. Unbelief says - “The Lord hath forgotten me.” But when the Lord brings to remembrance all the way that He has led us in the past and makes us see how He has made His goodness to pass before us in the way and how there hath not failed one word of all His promise, what shame there is then! The soul falls prostrate before Him and asks for pardon for unbelief.

“The ransomed of the Lord” (these are the people that I have been talking about. If you know anything of this, you are one of them) – “The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs - and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness - and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Amen.

# “ Our heart shall rejoice in Him”

Psalm 33:21

**Charles Haddon Spurgeon**

Blessed is the fact that Christians can rejoice even in the deepest distress; although trouble may surround them, they still sing; and – like many birds – they sing best in their cages. The waves may roll over them, but their souls soon rise to the surface and see the light of God’s countenance; they have a buoyancy about them which keeps their head always above the water – and helps them to sing amid the tempest - ‘God is with me still.’ To whom shall the glory be given? Oh! To Jesus – it is all by Jesus.

Trouble does not necessarily bring consolation with it to the believer, but the presence of the Son of God in the fiery furnace with him fills his heart with joy. He is sick and suffering, but Jesus visits him and makes his bed for him. He is dying and the cold chilly waters of Jordan are gathering about him up to the neck, but Jesus puts His arms around him and cries - ‘Fear not, beloved; to die is to be blessed; the waters of death have their fountain-head in Heaven; they are not bitter, they are sweet as nectar, for they flow from the throne of God.’

As the departing saint wades through the stream and the billows gather around him – and heart and flesh fail him - the same voice sounds in his ears - ‘Fear not; I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God.’ As he nears the borders of the infinite unknown and is almost affrighted to enter the realm of shades, Jesus says - “Fear not, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” Thus strengthened and consoled, the believer is not afraid to die; nay he is even willing to depart, for since he has seen Jesus as the Morning Star, he longs to gaze upon Him as the sun in his strength. Truly the presence of Jesus is all the Heaven we desire. He is at once -

“The glory of our brightest days;  
The comfort of our nights.”



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