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FOREST FIRES
AND DOMINION

WHEN
TRUTH IS FALLEN
IN THE STREETS

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COMING TO THE
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I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE

Dr. Stephen Pollock

As we look back and watch 2020 in the rearview mirror of our lives, most will testify that 2020 was a year that will be associated with some form of loss. In this issue, Rev. Kimbro observes: “The year 2020 has been an unusual year to say the least. The coronavirus and its corollaries have had an unexpected and unprecedented impact upon our nations.” An online science magazine also included this sentiment: “2020 is a lost year on many fronts—including the loss of lives, the loss of jobs and the resultant economic slump, and the loss of certainty in a world we once knew—whose effects may be irreparable.” Beyond Covid-19, the past twelve months will have seen many of our readers losing loved ones, health, security, hope, and happiness.

Was 2020 a lost year? Is there a difference between a year of losses and a lost year? Does the thought of a lost year not suggest pointlessness? A lost year says we should forget 2020 and move from 2019 to 2021. Yet in God’s economy, a year of losses may mark a year that stands tall for good in the final charting of our lives. How do we rightly calculate loss?

One way to consider our losses is to remember those things that remain. There are certain things that the believer can never lose. We will never suffer the loss of Christ’s presence. The loss of the material and temporal may cause a discontented spirit. The writer of Hebrews confronts that tendency with the remembrance of the Savior’s presence. “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I

will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

The child of God will also never lose his soul. The fool is warned about an attachment to the world that leads to the ruin of the soul. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36) The precious truth implied in this is, even though we may lose the whole world, our souls are eternally secure. The believer is safe and secure in union with Christ. The latter verses of Romans 8 should encourage us to remember that nothing that has happened in 2020 can separate us from the love of Christ.

Peter encourages his readers to be realistic. “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:24-25). Loss is to be expected living in a fallen world. But the Word of Christ in the gospel endures. Though truth has fallen in the street, God’s truth remains. Whatever changes we have encountered in 2020 and whatever changes await in 2021, the truth remains that sinners are reconciled to God through the work of Christ. Furthermore, that everlasting gospel word tells us that, though we lose all, we cannot lose our inheritance. It is incorruptible, and undefiled. It cannot fade away and is truly reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4).

When we consider the things that remain, no year will ever be a lost year. No matter what losses we will suffer, the

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

(Hebrews 13:5)

sincere Christian will always enjoy the presence of Christ every year as we hold onto and trust the unfailing Word of our unchanging God. ■

Cast the burden of the present,
along with the sin of the past and
the fear of the future, upon the
Lord, who forsaketh not his saints.
Live by the day—aye, by the hour.
Put no trust in frames and feelings.
Care more for a grain of faith than
a ton of excitement. Trust in God
alone and lean not on the reeds of
human help. Be not surprised when
friends fail you: it is a failing world.
Never count upon immutability in
man: inconstancy you may reckon
upon without fear of disappoint-
ment... Serve God with all your
might while the candle is burning,
and then when it goes out for a sea-
son, you will have the less to regret.
Be content to be nothing, for that
is what you are. When your own
emptiness is painfully forced upon
your consciousness, chide yourself
that you ever dreamed of being full,
except in the Lord. Set small store
by present rewards; be grateful for
earnests by the way, but look for the
recompensing joy hereafter. Contin-
ue, with double earnestness, to serve
your Lord when no visible result
is before you. Any simpleton can
follow the narrow path in the light:
faith’s rare wisdom enables us to
march on in the dark with infallible
accuracy, since she places her hand
in that of her Great Guide.

C.H. Spurgeon
Lectures to My Students: Fainting Fits



WHEN TRUTH IS FALLEN IN THE STREET

The year 2020 has been an unusual year to say the least. The coronavirus and its corollaries have had an unexpected and unprecedented impact upon our nations. But is this a dangerous disease or a government conspiracy? Or could it be both? What's the truth? It depends upon where you get your information. This has also been the year of a presidential election in the USA. Certainly, on a matter of this significance, careful and objective news coverage should be easy to find. But, alas, agendas get in the way of truthfulness. Politicians can say one thing today and the opposite tomorrow. Maintaining an honest position on an issue has become less important than conforming to the changing opinions of select focus groups in the attempt to manipulate the masses. In earlier days, getting caught in such flagrant pandering would have been devastating to a candidate. Nowadays it can pass the media and much of the public with little notice or concern. But politics and viruses are not the only realms where truth has fallen on hard times. Whether one looks at the fields of science, history, morality, religion, or almost anywhere, it seems that a devastating reality of Isaiah's day has recurred in ours: "Truth is fallen in the street" (Isaiah 59:14). How is it that nations and entire cultures, which once cherished the principles of truth and real justice, have been reduced to the chaos and lies that flood the public arena and our very

streets? How should Christians respond to such circumstances? A look at a few choice texts of Scripture will guide our understanding and help us navigate these troubled waters as believers.

Abandoning Truth

One of the first things to notice, as this situation descends upon our culture, is that it is not a random event. Isaiah, like so many of the prophets, was calling Judah back to truth she had already been given. When Isaiah said, "Truth is fallen in the street," he was not speaking in a vacuum. Israel had been greatly privileged. They had been given great truth. Paul spoke of her advantages when he recalled that Israel had been given the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). Before Isaiah, the prophet Amos had already rebuked Israel and even recounted a series of chastening judgments that God's people had endured, and yet, after each experience of chastening, the repeated comment was, "Yet ye have not returned unto me saith the Lord" (Amos 4:6-12). But this came after a telling reminder: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (3:2). This doesn't mean that God was ignorant of other nations and their affairs. It simply means that there was a special acknowledgment of Israel. They had been privileged to receive His words to a greater extent than other nations. That is what made Israel's sin so great. They had sinned against light. They had chosen to ignore truth that had already been given. This is *apostasy*—falling away from truth you

already have. So the tragedy that Isaiah described followed something. It was the result of not living up to the truth. They lost the presence and benefits of truth because of sin.

The principles at work underneath Isaiah's awful declaration are easy to see in the modern world. Nations, that have been the benefactors of the great truths rediscovered and embraced following the Reformation, have chosen to systematically repudiate the gospel. Is it any wonder that truth itself (in every area of life) has become compromised and lies and violence rule the day? One marvels to see many nominal Christians in our day becoming fearful at the prospect of losing freedoms or prosperity within the nation, when they cared little for abandoning the truth and power of the gospel within the church decades ago.

Negotiating Truth

Another giant text on the theme of truth presents itself once the sad folly of abandoning truth has occurred. When the Jewish religious leaders brought Christ before Pilate for trial, Pilate quickly discerned that Jesus was an innocent man and that the chief priests had delivered him because of envy. He sought to release Him, but they would have nothing of it. They demanded that Christ be crucified and even threatened Pilate with more lies when they said that He could not be Caesar's friend if he released Jesus. Pilate needed to keep peace in the troubled region of Judea.

He certainly did not need accusations of disloyalty to be levied against him in Rome. What was the life of an innocent Jewish man in comparison with his personal and political position or even the peace of the region? One could almost pity Pilate as he reads the account of his pangs of conscience and his wife's troubled dream about dealing unjustly with Jesus. But in a day when truth has already been abandoned and apostasy holds sway, "truth" becomes just another commodity to be bartered and negotiated. Pilate allowed himself to become the servant of a manipulated mob. It would be interesting to have heard the inflection in Pilate's voice when he uttered these remarkable words to Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). How easily are those words virtually repeated by so many in our day!

For many, truth doesn't matter anymore. Whatever is necessary to "keep the peace", or to move public policy in a desired direction, or to advance an individual agenda, or just to profit oneself, becomes the truly relevant and important thing. Pragmatism, and ultimately self-serving violence, enter in when apostasy has made way for truth to be negotiated instead of obeyed. In reality, the question posed in this text is a cry of despair that most sinners refuse to recognize. They just want to keep things from interrupting their sin. Truth can be twisted, denied, or negotiated in the pursuit.

Discerning Truth

Christians will readily agree with the above descriptions of the underlying problems that plague our society. But another reality confronts us in these troubled times. Many believers, as they become disheartened or frustrated at the current state of affairs, become susceptible to zealously promoting truth *as they see it* in order to meet the crisis. A noble motive must often be acknowledged in such hearts, but the need for discernment, and perhaps even reserve, becomes important during such times. Gospel truth unites us as believers. Clear scriptural doctrine unites us as believers. These are the truths that we need to communicate to the world. But when Christians, who should indeed seek to bring all of

life into conformity with the Word, seek to convince others of their own understanding of how this applies to *everything* in life, they can often go astray. We can become self-focused as well. (Romans 14 warns us of this). Pick a topic. It's easy to find a Christian commenting upon it, claiming the authority of God's Word. Education, child rearing, vaccines, masks, traditional vs. alternative medicine, etc. Politics provides a cyclical example for Americans. Some Christians believe fervently that they *cannot* vote for any candidate with whom they disagree on some spiritual matter. It is a matter of conscience they say. And yet there are other equally sincere Christians who believe that they *must* vote for the very same candidate, as a matter of conscience, in order to keep the opposing candidate from gaining the office. Does God's Word demand that one of these *opinions* prevail? The presence of social media and the instant platforms it offers only magnifies the potential for propagating opinion claiming to be truth.

This is not to suggest that God's people should not have opinions about the issues of the day. It is to suggest that we seek the wisdom of God to know what is just an opinion, even an educated opinion, and what is a truth that God's Word clearly demands that we (and others) hold. How easily Christians can lose credibility on things that really matter, by being inflexible or unapproachable on things that really don't matter. Let us each seek to learn the discipline of graciously interacting with others, or graciously just allowing others to go their own way without forcing an interaction on these matters of indifference. Ironically, when we do otherwise, we usually become known for our opinions on these lesser things than we are known for our love and commitment to the greater things. A great text on this aspect of truth is, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). Let us be discerning and be careful not to claim as "God's truth" something that is not clearly demanded from God's Word.

Defending Truth

A final text that is worthy of notice

in these troubled times is found in Jeremiah 9:3. Here Jeremiah laments that while the ungodly "bend their tongue like their bow for lies" they are not "valiant for truth." John Bunyan spoke of such empty professors when he introduced Mr. By-Ends in his *Pilgrim's Progress*. This character distanced himself from those Christians who were "of the stricter sort" who hazarded all for God at a clap. Instead, he preferred "not to strive against wind and tide" and to only be zealous for religion when it went "in its silver slippers." What we need today is believers who fill in the gap that Jeremiah lamented and to be valiant for truth even when it is unpopular, or worse yet, has completely "fallen in the street." Once we have discerned what is non-negotiable truth from God's Word, let us firmly and calmly stand upon it with resolve. This is what it means to be "valiant for truth." A holy boldness does not carry with it of necessity a coarse spirit. Often it is much to the contrary. Jeremiah was certainly one of the few who was valiant for truth in Jerusalem's last days, and yet he *wept* for his people. Boldness and love go hand in hand.

It may take uncommon boldness to defend truth in the days that lie ahead for our nations. Persecution may again become the lot of God's believing people. But let us seek to face the coming days, whatever they bring, with unwavering faith in the goodness of God and seek to be a beacon of truth in our times. May we be as Daniel in Babylon against whom nothing could be found, unless they found occasion against him "concerning the law of his God" (Daniel 6:5).

May God give us wisdom, discernment, boldness and grace for days such as these. And let us remember that "the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32). Such strength will certainly be needed when truth is fallen in the street. ❖



Rev. Reggie Kimbro
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Coming to the Throne of God



Perhaps one of the most well-known verses of Scripture is Hebrews 4:16: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” This precious text is often quoted in public prayer. The words are often repeated by God’s people in times of particular and pressing trouble.

As we enter into a new year in the Lord’s will, we ought to be conscious that this is indeed a time of need. The year 2020 was one of great upheaval for many people across the world. As we consider a new year, unaware of what lies before us, the Scriptures exhort us in time of need to “come boldly unto the throne of grace.”

When the Lord’s people pray, we need to bear in mind that we are coming to a throne. Prior to us seeing the provision of the gospel in Christ, we lived in terror of God’s throne of justice and judgment, but now it is our privilege to come to God’s throne of grace. Thinking of the throne of grace, Spurgeon said these words are a “gem in a golden setting.”

We Come to God on the Basis of the Lord’s Reign

When we think of a throne, immediately we think of royalty. In the context of these great words, we read of Christ’s entrance into glory (Hebrews 4:14). Christ has ascended and taken the throne of glory and honor (Acts 2:30, 32).

As the Christian approaches the Lord in prayer, he must recognize that he is approaching the royal courts of heaven. We are instructed, therefore, to come reverently, recognizing the greatness of the One we approach. The “boldness” of Hebrews 4:16 is not associated with carelessness, but it is accompanied by a great sense of awe concerning the One into whose presence we enter.

When people are granted the privilege to approach an earthly king on an earthly throne, they are ordinarily expected to come in humility and submission, recognizing their own lowly position and the honorable position of the king. So, with the warrant of Hebrews 4:16 in our

hands, we come confessing our own unworthiness, and the greatness of our God enthroned. While an earthly visitor to an earthly palace may feel his own inadequacy, and hesitate to make his request, the gospel here exceeds the parallel! We may come to our King “boldly” because there is liberty without restraint. God is not asking us to hold back in our words! He is not asking us to perfectly frame our request before it could be considered! Rather, He wants us to pour out our souls before Him in prayer. In most circumstances, for a citizen to approach a throne would be considered privileged access and he would come with a sense of affection for the monarch, and admiration of his greatness; however, he would also feel the need to keep a respectful distance. Dear Christian, do not meditate only on your unworthiness, but see the wonderful access you have to the throne of grace and come with a great sense of overwhelming joy. God’s grace has made a way for you to meet with the Almighty Sovereign. May this year be one when we “serve (or worship) the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing” (Psalm 100:2). We do not keep our distance, because we have been

told to draw nigh. We have the privilege of entering the King's throne room and enjoying the most intimate communion!

If a subject is needy, and is invited to come to the throne, he would rejoice in the opportunity, knowing that the king would have power to bring about a change of circumstances. Perhaps John Newton had this thought in mind when he said:

*Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and pow'r are such,
None can ever ask too much.*

We Come to God on the Basis of the Lord's Redemption

In the Old Testament, the mercy seat was considered to be God's throne on earth (see Psalm 99:1). The great theme of the book of Hebrews is the superiority of the New Covenant administration over the Old Testament economy. The Old Testament types are pictures of the heavenly realities. Christ has not gone into a tabernacle made with hands, but into heaven itself (Hebrews 9:24). He has ascended to the heavenly throne— that which was pictured in the earthly mercy seat.

When we consider that the throne of God on earth was considered to be the mercy seat, some wonderful thoughts open up regarding the throne of grace in glory today. The mercy seat was considered the place of propitiation, where God's wrath was appeased by means of the sacrifice. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter into the Holiest of all with the blood of the sacrificial animal. The blood was sprinkled seven times upon the mercy seat. This all pointed forward to the death of Christ and the shedding of His blood that would satisfy God's justice.

As the believer comes to the throne of grace, his thoughts should be filled with the victory of Calvary. The way to God has been opened up through the shed blood of Christ. He has torn away the veil, and today in glory Christ presents all the merits of His finished work. He has met the demands of justice. The

throne to us then is one of grace. Your admission to the throne, dear believer, is not because you have been a good Christian this week! Your admission is not because you have successfully overcome a particular sin of late. Your admission is solely by God's grace, grounded upon the work of Christ!

The Old Testament mercy seat was upon the ark of the covenant; our approach to the throne of grace is to the God of the covenant. When we come to God, we often feel our failure, and it is right to confess it; however, the thought that is to grip our hearts is this: our access is not on account of any faithfulness on our part, but rather the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God! This is a throne, like no earthly throne, from which all promises are made good!

Under the Levitical economy, God was said to meet with His people at the mercy seat, and would commune with His people from that place (Exodus 25:22). How clearly we are directed to God's throne of grace. Today the believer is not being sent like Adam from the place of meeting, rather he is being brought right into it through the merits of Christ's work.

These great redemptive truths are suggested by the context of the invitation and summons to come to the throne of grace. We come enabled through our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15). How glad we ought to be that as we come to God's throne, we come through our Mediator. He is the "Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14) entitled to entrance to glory, yet He is man, who took our flesh and understands our need (Hebrews 4:15).

Our requests are full of flaws, yet Christ takes them and perfects them before the throne. Our faults will not prevent the success of prayer, because our whole confidence is centered upon the victory of Christ.

We Come to God on the Basis of the Lord's Resources

What help, grace, and mercy there is that proceeds from God's throne! As

the book of Revelation comes to a close, we read these words: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22:1).

In the eternal state, there will be that continual supply from the throne of God and the Lamb. But this great stream that is so full of grace is flowing today! How much we forfeit when we fail to come and drink! There is a supply for us in our insufficiency. He is gracious, He grants grace that is sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:9). There is a supply for us in our unworthiness; He is merciful. There is a supply to us in our weakness; He gives us help in our time of need.

Perhaps as you think of this great summons to come to the throne of grace, you fear because you know you are still in the place of condemnation. Dear unconverted one, lay this text to your heart as an invitation in the gospel. Do you feel your need of help, of saving help? Do you feel your need of grace? Do you feel your need of mercy? Come to this throne. No longer do you need to stay in your sin! Do not hope to come when you are improved, but come today in all your need to the God of provision.

May we each know the blessing of drawing near in this year.

Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat,
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea;
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burdened souls to Thee,
And such, O Lord, am I! ❧



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First Year in the Ministry



When I came in late 2019 as a licentiate to minister in Calgary, my constant prayer was Exodus 33:15, *“And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”*

The Lord's presence was something the congregation and I were granted, and was one of the various encouragements the Lord gave to accept the call, which He made through His people in December 2019. Even more encouraging was to see the Lord answering Moses' prayer, and so mine, in the verse before: *“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14). As a family, we were encouraged that the Lord would be with us, and would carry us over the sea to settle us in Canada, in the city of Calgary.

A few days after we arrived on March 9, the world went into Covid-shutdown. Indeed, we only had two Lord's Days in the pulpit before our elders, following advice from the presbytery's Executive Committee, closed the building for public worship. Four years of pastoral theology had prepared me for all sorts of situations, but not this. The preaching ministry now became the “Online Church Ministry” uploaded to SermonAudio and YouTube. But, we needed some extra hardware, some of which needed to be shipped, and promptly got lost in the mail. So, after many weeks, we could finally make live broadcasts, together with the faithful assistance of our media technician, Isaiah. Prayer meetings were broadcast live from my study, and the faithful joined in prayer via Skype.

The pastoral side of ministry was almost exclusively done by telephone and email. Weekly emails kept everyone

up-to-date, and helped the congregants with a sense of belonging. In the third week of May we held an online gospel mission on Facebook, broadcasting live at 7p.m. every weekday evening. My eldest children sang, and I preached a short gospel message. It was carried on Facebook, and then uploaded to YouTube and SermonAudio. We have been quite encouraged with the number of people watching in the weeks and months since then.

One of our congregants, Mr. Wayne Downey, was in a nursing home, and could no longer receive visitors, not even from his wife Heather. Initially, the only contact was via Skype, and I was also able to renew fellowship with Wayne again. Wayne was clearly weaker than he had been. Shortly after, the Lord called Wayne to Glory on June 4, 2020 in the middle of the night. Fortunately, Heather was allowed to be with him until his last moments; however, I was not permitted to visit, but could speak to him, read, and pray from the entrance porch via cell phone. On June 12, I led the graveside service attended by Heather and very few close family members.

At the beginning of June, the government of Alberta approved an unlimited number for church attendance, and so the session re-opened the doors. Since then, it has almost been business-as-usual, with obvious measures taken. Most congregants have now returned, with very few exceptions, owing to their personal circumstances or concerns.

The LTBS radio ministry also continued with Rev. Ian Goligher's weekday programming, and passing the reins of the weekend programs

to me in June. Unfamiliar software and new workflows yet again had to be mastered, as well as the very strict deadline to submit the finished programs weekly. This ministry was originally set up in Calgary in 1977, through a request of founding member Jim Warnock to Rev. Frank McClelland in Toronto. After a few years of broadcasting, there was enough interest in the stand and witness made by the Free Presbyterian Church for a congregation to be formed, and Rev. William Whiteside arrived in May 1980 to be the first minister of Calgary Free Presbyterian Church. Today, LTBS radio ministry still draws people in to hear the preaching of God's Word, some of whom end up staying. Seven or more have recently stayed and become regular attendees.

This September was busy with my delayed installation taking place on Friday, September 18, the 40th Anniversary celebration taking place on the Saturday, and a special Missions Report service on the Lord's Day evening. This fall, we have had the joy of accepting three people into communicant membership and a couple have also inquired into being baptized.

Thankfully, we have not had any cases of Covid-19. We are grateful that the Lord has carried us up hence, and has carried His people through these recent trials. We know that underneath are His everlasting arms. ☞



Rev. Paul A. Backhurst
minister of the Calgary FPC,
Alberta

A MAN WHOM GOD USED

by Rev. David Mook



On October 3, 1983, three theological students attended their first day of classes in the Theological Hall of the Free Presbyterian Church in its North American context. That day marked the beginning of the second year of the training program. Eventually, that ministerial training program became Geneva Reformed Seminary with its physical location in a building adjoining the main church building on Haywood Road in Greenville. The teacher, almost exclusively, was Dr. Alan Cairns, then in his fourth year as the minister of Faith Free Presbyterian Church in Greenville, SC. I was one of the students on that October morning. For me, the ministry of Dr. Alan Cairns (1940-2020), who died on November 5 at the age of 80, yielded a profound and life-altering impact.

Alan Cairns visited Greenville to supply the pulpit in the summer of 1978, just a few months after the congregation affiliated with the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster. He disavowed, in direct terms, any interest in being considered as a candidate for the church's pastorate; however, he returned to Greenville in 1979 for another period of pulpit supply. The leaders of the small congregation, including Dr. Gail Gingery (1928-2019), developed a growing interest in calling the Ulsterman to take up the leadership of Faith FPC.

Upon accepting the call of the congregation and resolving that the Lord had directed him to move his wife and young son to the United States,

Rev. Cairns indicated that he was not sure why the Lord wanted him to be in Greenville. In the early months of his pastorate in Greenville, Rev. Cairns and his wife, Joan, met severe challenges that did not daunt them in their pursuit of the will of God. The formation of the Theological Hall, a move about which members of the Presbytery of Ulster expressed reservations, marked the beginning of the Lord's answer about the reason for His call to Dr. Cairns.

Dr. Cairns was a pioneer in the *Let the Bible Speak* radio ministry in Northern Ireland. People in Greenville often heard Dr. Cairns on WMUU. On his arrival in the United States, he began producing a daily version of *Let the Bible Speak* for North American listeners. In addition, Dr. Cairns launched a career as an author, publishing early in his Greenville ministry *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, now in its third edition. His encouragement was instrumental in Mr. Steven Lee launching *Sermonaudio* in 2000, now one of the world's major internet outlets for the preaching of God's Word.

In June 1984, the congregation of Faith FPC opened its new building on Haywood Road. In March 1985, two other North American ministers, Dr. Frank McClelland and Rev. John Greer, joined Dr. Cairns and four of the students in the inaugural Week of Prayer. In 1987, under the urging of Dr. Cairns, the ordained ministers and licentiates organized the Standing

Commission of the Presbytery for North America. It became the forerunner of the presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of North America. The Ulster presbytery formally constituted the new denomination on May 17, 2005.

More often than not, Dr. Cairns labored behind the scenes, anxious that his colleagues be more prominent. He was the first moderator of the North American Commission, but after serving for a while, deferred to the leadership of his colleagues. The Lord used Dr. Cairns, along with his close friend, Dr. McClelland, and their younger colleague, Rev. Greer, in the expansion of the Free Presbyterian Church across North America, including in more recent years, the extension of the work into Mexico and the Caribbean. God worked through the tireless efforts of His servant to enlarge God's kingdom.

In part of his series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer, Dr. Cairns gave special emphasis to the petition, "Thy kingdom come." He desired the growth of Christ's kingdom through the ministry of the Word and emphasized consistently the liberating power of the gospel of justification by grace alone. The Lord's servant who touched and continues to touch so many lives around the world has laid down all of his burdens. Those who labored alongside him miss his personal presence and fellowship, but they know that the work of Dr. Alan Cairns was not in vain. His legacy is far-reaching, not least in the generations of Free Presbyterian ministers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean who rejoice in his steadfast testimony and praise God for his perseverance in the truth to the end. ■



FOREST FIRES & DOMINION

Massive wildfires claim millions of acres of North American forests annually. Houses and businesses are destroyed. Human and animal lives are lost. Billions of dollars are spent trying to control the fires. People shake their heads and wonder at the cause of such devastation. Many Christians will claim, “Adam’s sin is the ultimate cause. This destruction is part of the Curse.” Then many will throw up their hands reflecting a so-there’s-nothing-we-can-do-about-it attitude.

Christians who take such a position are like Job’s friends: right but wrong. All suffering is because of sin, but God was not specifically punishing Job, a man He claimed “was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” God was teaching Job—and us—spiritual lessons. Job’s “miserable comforters” did not represent God correctly (Job 42:7-8). The Curse may be the ultimate reason behind the wildfires’ destruction, but the nothing-we-can-do-about-it attitude is a copout. Christians who hold such a position fail to recognize the God-ordained relationship between man and the creation.

The Big Burn

Wildfires in the American west are nothing new. The dead leaves and undergrowth of many forests naturally catch fire on a regular basis. Since the fuel has only accumulated for a few

years, the fire does not burn long nor is it extremely hot as it spreads along the forest floor. The low, rapidly moving fire removes the debris on the forest floor and scorches the bottom of tree trunks, but usually does not kill mature trees. New undergrowth is quickly reestablished, and the forest goes on.

In 1910 a number of small fires were burning in the northern United States and southern Canadian forests. The US National Forest Service (established five years earlier) had been fighting some of them with a modicum of success. It was understaffed, underfunded, and undertrained for the job. The summer of 1910 had been exceptionally dry and hot. In August, hurricane force winds caused many of the small fires to merge into The Big Burn, which is believed to be the largest fire in American history. Over 3 million acres, an area the size of Connecticut, was burned within 2 days. Several towns were completely destroyed, others significantly damaged. Over 80 people died. The weather changed. Rain and snow extinguished the blaze virtually overnight.

Stories of heroic fire fighting and narrow escapes from The Big Burn filled newspapers. Government money flowed into the US Forest Service. They were to prevent such devastation from ever happening again. They officially adopted the policy: immediately extinguish any forest fire.

A few years later a bear cub escaped a fire by climbing a tree. Rescued and named “Smokey”, he became the US Forest Service’s mascot. On a 1944 poster, wearing a Forest Service hat and blue jeans, he premiered the slogan “Smokey Says—Care will prevent 9 out of 10 forest fires!” as he poured water on a campfire. In 1947 his message changed to “Remember...Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires.” Still in use, it is the longest running and most recognized ad campaign. It is also very successful.

Although well intentioned and seemingly making sense, the let-no-forest-fire-burn policy of the past 100+ years has literally fueled today’s fire disasters. The amount of undergrowth, dead branches and leaves on the forest floor has become thick. When it eventually catches fire, the blaze is hot and the flames high. It spreads rapidly and is extremely destructive. Such fires are difficult to control, and if conditions are favorable for the blaze, control can be impossible. One must wait for the weather to change. But unlike what happened to end The Big Burn, the weather may favor the fire for weeks.

Biblical Dominion

Scripture teaches that earth and its fullness is the Lord’s, but from the beginning He granted humans the privilege and responsibility of caring for it. It was Adam’s responsibility “to



dress and to keep” the Garden of Eden as it met his needs (Genesis 2:15). God told Adam that he and his progeny were to subdue and have dominion over the physical world (Genesis 1:26-30). Scripture has abundant examples of humans using the physical world, and God often directs man to plant crops, build houses, dig wells, and the like.

God expects us to use our dominion over the physical world to meet our physical needs.

Scripture repeatedly tells us to work and condemns the sluggard who refuses. Except for some broad moral guidelines, what we are to do and how we are to do it is not delineated. Part of being created “in His image” is that we have intelligence. Having it, we are expected to use it. What we can and cannot, should and should not do as we seek to have the physical world meet our physical needs is something we must use our intelligence to determine. Sometimes we get it right, sometimes we don’t.

About 50 years ago scientists determined that the no-forest-fire policy was developing dangerous tinderboxes and suggested ways to deal with the problem. But images

of raging fires and destroyed forests, along with Smokey’s success in communicating his negative-forest-fire message, have hampered changes. In 2001 Smokey’s slogan changed to “Only You Can Prevent Wildfires.” The subtle shift was, in part, to suggest that there are good and bad fires in nature. Where they have been adopted, the good fires of controlled burns and firebreaks have helped to restore an ecological balance and have curtailed massive destructive blazes. These measures, however, have met with limited public acceptance. Opposition is especially keen among some fire fighters who make handsome salaries fighting massive blazes, but would earn far less dealing with preventive measures.

When most Christians think of God giving humans dominion over the physical creation, they think of farmers producing food and perhaps

the energy efficiency of their homes. Our God-ordained position of physical world dominion is actually much larger. This simplified glance at the North American forest fire phenomenon only begins to reflect the complexity and extent of the dominion we exercise over the physical world. Also, it only hints that what was once considered

wise can change to not-so-wise and even wrong.

Many Christians find such far-reaching concepts uncomfortable. Some say, “Just point me to the verse and then tell me what I’m supposed to do.” Our dominion over the physical world does not work that way. We have to use our God-given intelligence to determine how we should exercise that dominion. In the next few articles, Lord willing, I plan to deal with some Scriptural concepts and present practices that Christians need to consider as we exercise dominion over God’s world. ▣



Mr. William Pinkston served as a science teacher at Bob Jones Academy for 50 years. He is a charter member of Faith Free Presbyterian Church of Greenville, SC.

GENESIS

GOD'S BOOK OF BEGINNINGS STUDY NOTES

Chapter 8

Key verse:

"And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake..." Genesis 8:21.

This is vital information about Noah's worship by sacrifice and his survival because of God's covenant of mercy. God stated that He would never again destroy "everything living" by water while the earth remained.

Observations

1. When the Genesis record states that "God remembered Noah, and every living thing", it means that God acted to support Noah by re-establishing life outside the ark (Genesis 8:1).

Several statements show that God actively operated on the elements of the earth to make it habitable: "God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters were assuaged" (Genesis 8:1). "The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained" (Genesis 8:2).

The result was, "After the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated" (Genesis 8:3). The "Ark rested" (Genesis 8:4), and "The waters decreased continually until the tenth month" (Genesis 8:5). In Psalm 104, the psalmist wrote of God's work of creation as laying the foundations of the earth. He also wrote about the great flood, that the "Waters stood above the mountains," and of God's covenant with Noah that never flood the whole earth again.

"Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth" (Psalm 104:9). This history of God's creation of the world and His setting boundaries for the seas after the flood was rehearsed before God by the Old Testament saints as part of their worship. We can do so too.

2. The world that Noah experienced after he exited the ark was vastly different.

Dr. Henry Morris wrote on the physical changes in the "new world":

- (1) "The oceans were much more extensive, since they now contained all the waters which once were above the firmament" and in the subterranean reservoirs of the "great deep."
- (2) The land areas were much less extensive than before the Flood, with a much greater portion of its surface uninhabitable for this reason.
- (3) The thermal vapor blanket had been dissipated, so that strong temperature differentials were inaugurated, leading to a gradual buildup of snow and ice in the polar latitudes, rendering much of the extreme northern and southern land surfaces also essentially uninhabitable.
- (4) Mountain ranges uplifted after the Flood emphasized the more rugged topography of the postdiluvian continents, with many of these regions also becoming unfit for human habitation.
- (5) Winds and storms, rains and snows, were possible now, thus rendering the total environment less congenial to man and animals than had once been the case.
- (6) The environment was also more hostile because of harmful radiation from space, no longer filtered out by the vapor canopy, resulting (along with other contributing environmental factors) in gradual reduction in human longevity after the Flood.

(7) Tremendous glaciers, rivers, and lakes existed for a time, with the world only gradually approaching its present state of semi-aridity.

(8) Because of the tremendous physiographic and isostatic [earth's crust] movements generated by the collapse of the subterranean caverns and the post-Flood uplifts, the crust of the earth was in a state of general instability, reflected in recurrent volcanic and seismic activity all over the world for many centuries and continuing in some degree even to the present.

(9) The lands were barren of vegetation, until such time as plant life could be re-established through the sprouting of seeds and cuttings buried beneath the surface.

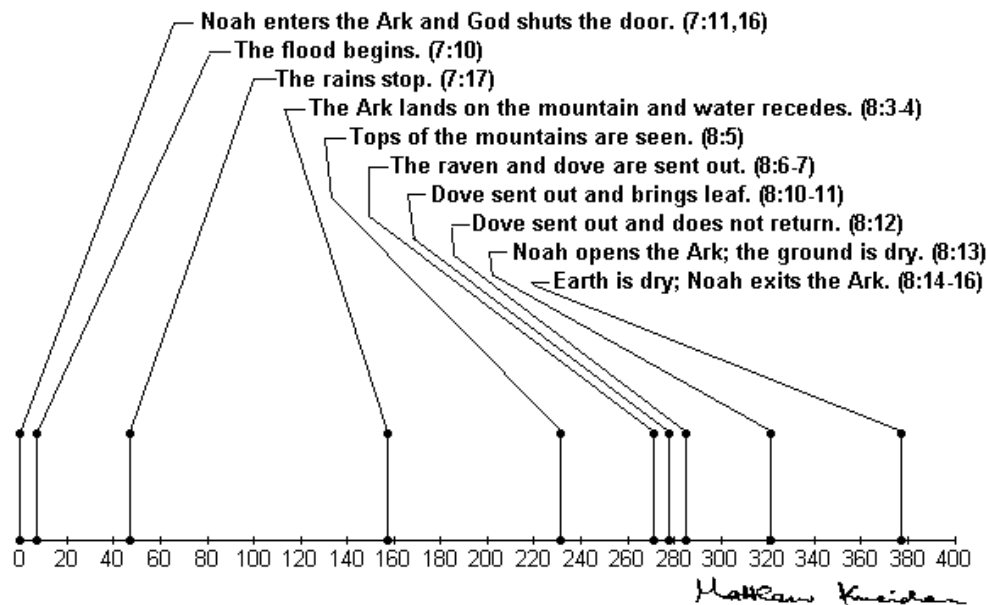
(10) There is even a possibility that the earth's rotation speeded up by about 1.5 percent if the year was really 360 days long."

[*The Genesis Record*, Henry M. Morris, Baker Book House: pp 211-212].

3. The flood impacted the whole earth leaving sedimentary rocks containing multiplied fossils in apparent order of simple organisms nearer the bottom to complex land creatures nearer the top.

Sedimentary rocks are formed from sediment with cementing agents present in the water. In the solidifying process, dead creatures and vegetation got trapped and preserved. These formations by the flood-model, by their very nature, generally bury the smallest creatures lower down and tend to bury larger creatures nearer the surface. This pattern, though not consistent, has been hijacked by evolutionists. They interpret them as "geological ages." They attribute them to natural processes at work over vast periods of time. Dr. Henry Morris stated: "Evolutionists have arranged these

Timeline of Noah and the Flood



supposed “geological ages” in a supposed chronological order, purportedly extending vertically upward through the “geological column” of sedimentary rocks deposited above the crystalline rocks on the bottom. The fossils found in these rocks, proceeding supposedly from simple to complex, comprise their best evidence for the theory of organic evolution. Thus, if the fossiliferous deposits are mainly records of the Flood year, instead of millions of years of upward evolutionary struggle, the entire evolutionary system is scientifically bankrupt. There is little wonder, therefore, that the concept of the geological ages is defended with such fervor, and that “flood geology” is ridiculed or ignored” [Op. cit. p 213].

4. Every human and every animal in the world today has descended from life in the ark (Genesis 8:15-19).

The new world was re-inhabited from the family of Noah and from the animals that were preserved in the ark. Notice the reference to “kinds” (Genesis 8:19). These are the species of animals which would multiply and diversify. There would be variation among animals as they would adapt to their new climatic conditions. They would develop into varieties within their “families,” but never into new species.

5. Worship by blood sacrifice was immediately re-instituted in the new world order (Genesis 8:20-21).

Worship by blood sacrifice has been the history of the world since the fall of man. God accepted Noah’s offering. The LORD smelled a “sweet savor.” Literally, it was a savor of rest. The term “rest” becomes a theme in this context of life after the flood.

Noah’s name means *rest*. The ark rested on Mount Ararat (Genesis 8:4). The dove, at first flight out of the ark, found no rest (Genesis 8:9). God was at rest after the world’s judgment and with Noah’s offering. Noah and his family could be at rest with God’s covenant of rest because God promised He would never again judge the whole world by water. That assurance would have greatly comforted all who, after the time of the flood, may have lived in fear of future worldwide flooding.

Application

- This chapter holds vital information on how Noah fared in the ark and how he was re-established in the earth. It fills an important part of world history, so we know a great deal about the survival of mankind in the greatest universal judgment this world has known to date.

- This history is the Christian’s answer to racism. Today there are different nationalities, but there is only one human race. The apostle Paul declared that God “...hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

- God demands blood atonement so He may reconcile sinful men to Himself to enjoy peace with Him. In sovereign grace and in perfect fulfilment of the consistent biblical principle of blood atonement, God has provided the perfect atoning sacrifice in the death of His Son, to save His people from the guilt of sin. As Noah and his family were saved by trusting in God’s provision of the ark by their entering into it, sinners are gathered safely into Christ through faith, when they personally and totally trust in His redeeming work on the cross of Calvary.



Rev. Ian Goligher
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The Blessing of Public Worship

Among the many challenges of 2020, not the least for Christians has been the matter of public worship services. The very tradition of church gatherings has been shaken. As the months have passed, Christians have struggled to find acceptable ways to gather safely to worship the Lord. It has not been easy for either church leaders nor the congregations. It has also not been easy for Christian women of all ages as they weigh the dangers against the desire to gather for worship. Concerns for the health of others, for the training of the children in God's ways, and for one's own heart worship of the Lord Jesus factor into the decision making. In these challenging times, one thing is needful: Christian women need the place of public worship for the building up of their faith and holy living.

How easy for women of all ages to slip into habits that lose the vitality of real worship because of the realities of real life—like managing to find all the needed shoes for every family member; overcoming physical and mental pain; pushing through a multitude of other hindrances to be at church. Busy women often wearily sigh as they slide into the pew for the worship service. Truly our dear Lord Jesus sees the plight of His precious daughters on earth with love and pity. “Come unto Me” is His encouraging word! God's deep, eternal love for His children is revealed in His good and abundant provisions for them. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* questions 89 and 90 succinctly teach us about public worship.

Q. 89. How is the word made effectual to salvation? A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the

preaching of the word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation.

Q. 90. How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation? A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

How refreshing to weary and burdened women to discover the blessing of public worship! The Holy Spirit uses the reading and preaching of the Word not only to save sinners, but also to build them up in holiness, to comfort them, and to increase their faith. God's faithful preacher under the guidance of the Holy Spirit prepares a spiritual feast week by week, service by service. In a similar way as a woman plans and prepares a feast for her hungry family, God's servant prepares spiritual feasts to nourish your precious soul, yet with much greater effort of mind, body, and soul. The Holy Spirit leads the minister to apply the Word to the needs of your soul. It is for you, dear woman, in need of a blessing! When we understand that the church service is truly a spiritual feast, coming to the public gathering for worship will revive our hearts. We will more eagerly pay attention, receive what we hear with faith and love in active, vital, heart worship before God. Through our regular attendance upon the Word, the truth will lodge in our hearts and be reflected in our lives.

So, precious daughter of the Lord, as you slide into the pew for Sunday

worship, enter into the service with thanksgiving and praise. Confess before Him your sins and needs, consecrate yourself with diligence and faith, and commune with the Lover of your soul. In this refreshing way, you'll be strengthened for the daily walk of faith, and those of you who are wives and mothers will be fortified to love your husband and children, keep your home, and be the godly woman of Titus 2.

As I was writing this column, the heart-stopping news of Dr. Alan Cairns' sickness and hospitalization was announced. I spent the next days not only praying for this dear servant of Christ, but also remembering his ministry in my own life. I sat under his ministry from 1984-1988 where I learned to enter into worship for the inestimable good it did for my soul. Problems needing advice were totally resolved by the end of the service because I had been pointed to Christ, the great Problem Solver. The Lord healed my hurting heart as the Holy Spirit applied the Word to my need. I liken Dr. Cairns' messages to a deep-sea treasure hunting expedition: it was only as his tone of voice softened at the conclusion that I surfaced with a sigh, realizing that deep, spiritual truth-gems from God's Holy Word had been brilliantly revealed and thoroughly explained by this gifted master preacher. I am eternally grateful. ❧



Mrs. Barbara Mooney
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COMMON DATING QUESTIONS

by Dr. Stephen Pollock

Mark Twain's humorous testimony is not unique: "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."

Much harm can be done as teenagers walk through the fog, forgetting that their parents have once walked the same way. While there are many cases of ungodly parenting leading their children to ruin, a wise young person will be thankful for the wisdom of Christian parents as they consider their future. They will involve their parents in the big decisions concerning church, career, and family. The wise listen to the wise. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). Safety is required in the realm of dating, and therefore, there is the need for counsel.

Remember—I'm using the term "dating" as a convenient word for an unmarried man and an unmarried woman spending social time together as a couple, to the exclusion of other people. Previous articles have argued that such interaction should have a marital focus. I'm not repeating that material, but it must be stated because it is that marital focus that will be the foundation for a parent's godly answers to questions about dating.

Whom should I date?

In light of our foundational principle, you should only date someone you *could* (not will) marry! That will ordinarily involve a level of attraction. Such attraction is part of how God has made us. Yet, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30). Beyond physical attraction we

should only date those with whom we are in spiritual agreement (2 Corinthians 6:14). When Paul taught widows about marriage, he told them to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). If we are to marry in the Lord and if dating has marriage as its goal, then Christian dating will be in the Lord. But here you must use discernment. You should be aware that not all who profess to be Christians actually possess a new heart. Before dating you should want to see evidence that the other person actually loves the Lord, walking after the Spirit and not after the flesh (Romans 8:1-4). Every pastor will know someone who made a pretence of Christianity to secure the hand and heart of that nice Christian girl.

When should I date?

If marriage is the goal, then dating is best left until marriage is a near possibility. "Near" is clearly open to subjective interpretation. I know young people who are able to cite the example of Mr. and Mrs. So-And-So who started dating at age thirteen and have been married thirty years! In response, I know of many people who were involved in serious, train-wreck relationships before marriage. Given the solemn responsibilities of marriage, I think there should be a level of maturity and monetary stability prior to entering into a dating relationship. I think that's at least part of the application from Proverbs 24:27, "Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house."

What should we do on a date?

As we are aiming at marriage, we need to remember that marriage is a covenant of companionship. Therefore, on a date it is important to talk a lot and listen a lot. The more you talk the less time

there will be for other temptations. It will be very difficult to know someone very well before dating. Use dates to properly assess the suitability and character of your date. I said earlier—date someone you could marry, not necessarily someone you will marry. Beware of a person who loves to talk about themselves and has no desire to know about you. Also, beware of someone who doesn't let you see who they really are! You want a spiritual marriage, so a spiritual foundation should be laid when dating. Couples should enjoy spending time together with the Lord in church meetings and in private times of prayer and Bible reading.

What level of physical affection is appropriate?

How far is too far? Allow me a double metaphor: don't play with fire at the edge of a cliff! Young men—take the lead here, protecting the purity of the relationship. Young ladies—be bold and don't be led into sin!

- Remember to guard your heart (Matthew 5:27-30).
- Remember sexual practices outside of marriage are sinful. (Study 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Romans 8:13, 13:11-14; 2 Timothy 2:22).
- Remember your date is not your wife and someday she might be someone else's wife! Thou shalt not steal!
- Remember the biblical metaphors for sexual relations: lie, know, touch. They help us decide what is not wise conduct.
- Remember that no means no!

Dating can be fun and exciting. Under God, godly marriages will be formed for the good of Christ's kingdom. But dating is dangerous if you're not wise! ❖

PRESBYTERY MEETING IN THE CLOUD



At the October 2019 meeting of the presbytery in Malvern, PA, not one attendee had the slightest idea about the events that were to unfold during 2020. The cancelation of the May Week of Prayer and the deferral of most presbytery business until the October Week of Prayer and presbytery meeting left the members reasonably confident that the meetings in Calgary would take place. When the Executive Committee (composed of the five presbytery officers) realized that ongoing international travel restrictions would prevent the Calgary meetings from taking place, the Executive Committee began to consider alternatives. Some items of presbytery business required action, such as the adoption of the presbytery's budget for 2021.

At the Executive Committee's request, the presbytery voted to authorize a virtual meeting by the use of the Zoom platform that many companies, schools, and church organizations used during the closures that occurred because of the coronavirus pandemic. The Executive Committee planned the meeting for October 6-7. Each day began with up to an hour for the preaching of the Word. Following the preaching, there was an hour for corporate prayer. After a one-hour break, the meeting resumed for two hours of business. On the second day, the presbytery completed its agenda at the end of one and a half hours, leaving the remaining half-hour for an additional season of prayer.

A total of thirty members of the presbytery attended the entire two days of the meeting or significant parts of it. Thankfully, the technological problems

were at a minimum, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Jonathan McAnally, a ruling elder from Toronto FPC, who acted as the host for the meeting. Rev. Ian Goligher from Cloverdale FPC, the moderator of the presbytery, preached the Word during the Tuesday prayer session with Rev. David Mook from Phoenix FPC, the clerk of the presbytery, taking the assignment for the Wednesday prayer session.

The Executive Committee directed that all reports for the presbytery had to be in writing and had to be available for circulation a week in advance. That approach meant that there was no reading of the reports, which left time for questions or discussion followed by the adoption of each report. The presbytery also agreed to defer some items of business until the time when the presbytery members can meet in person.

Among the highlights of the business portion of the meeting was the adoption of the Finance Committee's proposed 2021 budget. The Mission Board's report included the announcement that the Board intends to retain the services of Mr. Ben Owen, an accountant and a member of the Greenville congregation, to assist in the monitoring of the Board's annual budget. The appointment will be effective on January 1, 2021.

Other actions the presbytery took included the approval of Mr. John Kelly's application to be received under the presbytery's care. The Publications Committee

reported that Dr. Stephen Pollock succeeded Rev. Goligher as editor of *Current* beginning with the Spring 2020 issue and recorded its appreciation for the stellar manner of Mr. Goligher's work in that position.

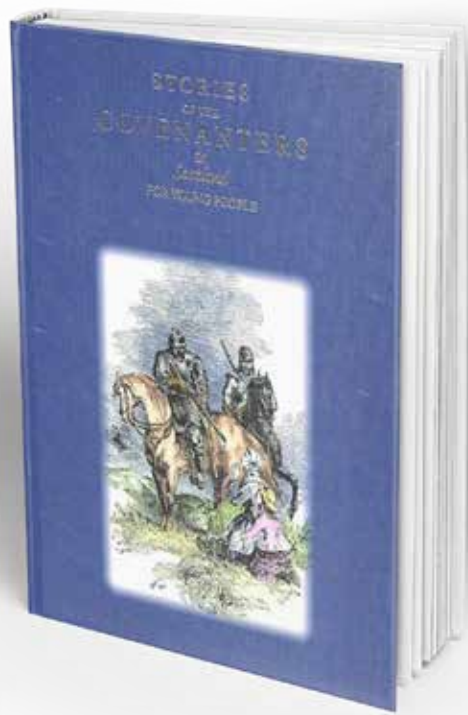
Because of the forthcoming retirement of Rev. Goligher from the pastorate in Cloverdale, the presbytery agreed to the Cloverdale session's request to appoint Dr. Larry Saunders of Toronto FPC as the interim moderator of the church, effective on the retirement date. The presbytery also appointed Rev. Goligher to function as Rev. Paul Backhurst's senior minister until 2023. The special commission that conducted Rev. Backhurst's installation in Calgary FPC on September 18 delivered its report of the Lord's blessing on that occasion.

While the members of the presbytery regretted the inability for in-person fellowship and discussion, they came to the adjournment of the virtual meeting with thanks to the Lord for His providential appointment of the unusual means that enabled the required business of the presbytery to proceed. The presbytery hopes, in the will of the Lord, to resume its in-person meetings at Faith FPC in Greenville, SC in May 2021. ❧



Rev. David G. Mook

is the minister of Phoenix Free Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Arizona. He serves as clerk of the presbytery of the FPCNA, chairman of the Constitutional Documents Committee, and is an adjunct professor in the field of practical theology at Geneva Reformed Seminary.



Stories of the Scottish Covenanters

by Robert Pollok

Rev. Lloyd Sprinkle was a godly Baptist pastor in Virginia. After coming to embrace the “doctrines of grace,” he became burdened to teach his flock that these doctrines were historically and earnestly confessed by most Bible-believing Christians. Lloyd felt compelled to reprint many of the difficult-to-obtain old books that taught these doctrines. So, Sprinkle Publications began in 1976 and reprinted many of the great, old books. Although Lloyd Sprinkle went home to be with Christ on September 26, 2019, his books are still available through Reformation Heritage Books.

Stories of the Scottish Covenanters by Robert Pollok was first printed in 1827, and reprinted by Sprinkle. These Scottish Christians were called “Covenanters” because they had signed the National Covenant vowing to worship in the biblical Presbyterian heritage of John Knox. Thus, they were in direct opposition to the tyrannical Stuart monarchs of Scotland. This resulted in the martyrdom of 18,000 Covenanters from 1660-1688.

This book records intriguing histories of three families that lived in the West of Scotland during the “Killing Times.” The first story is about the Rev. James

Bruce who exercised an itinerant ministry “on the run” with his wife, son, and daughter for a considerable period until wicked persecutors murdered them one by one as they fled from one hiding place to another.

The second account is about the wealthy Gemmell family of Irvine. George Gemmell was a staunch supporter of the Stuarts and a nominal Episcopalian. His godly wife, Isabella, was true to her Presbyterian upbringing. As a praying wife and mother, she sought to rear their two sons in the truth of the gospel and in sympathy with the persecuted. Of course, George opposed her godliness and drew away Edward, the younger son, to follow his evil persecuting ways. But Ralph, the older son, loved the Bible and adhered to his godly mother’s faith. Gradually, the stress of marriage to a wicked, cruel husband broke down Isabella’s health and she died when the boys were barely teenagers. Her last words to Ralph were “Be faithful to Christ, for He never forsakes His people.” Ralph began attending the secret worship of the persecuted and was quickly apprehended by the soldiers, but he was freed by his father’s influence. Being apprehended the second time, he was exiled as a slave to Jamaica.

Finally, the Glorious Revolution restored Ralph to his father and to his brother. Isabella’s prayers were answered at last for her whole household being united in Christ.

The third history tells of the Thomson family that lived near Glasgow. James was the head of the household and served as a soldier in Charles II’s army in Holland. After several months, the sad news of James’ death reached the little family. His widowed wife, Agnes, was left with two young children: Helen was four years old and William was only two. Agnes returned to the old homestead of her childhood. Her father’s former shepherd was the owner of the farm. He was a godly man and allowed the widow to move into an empty house on the farm. From time to time he shared food with the little family. They were all Covenanters and enjoyed fellowship in the true worship of God. When Helen was only eight years old, she went with her mother to a secret worship service. On the way home, two soldiers met them and demanded that Agnes swear allegiance to the king or be shot. Agnes begged for mercy because her husband had died in loyal military service to the king. They refused her mercy and ordered Agnes to prepare to die. Tearfully, she exhorted Helen to raise her younger brother as a believer in Christ. After Agnes prayed her final prayer for Christ to receive her, they shot her dead. Little Helen fainted and the old farmer found her. Compassionately, he adopted Helen and her brother and raised them as believers in Christ.

The Stuarts’ policy of religious genocide must not be forgotten by God’s people. Knowing the history that brought many of the church’s present liberties is absolutely essential. Here is inspiration for young and old to stand for Christ in these evil days. ❧



Rev. Myron Mooney
minister of Trinity FPC,
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Babies in the Plans of God

Last time, I asked you to guess who was the most important baby ever born. Do you know the answer? It's Jesus! Did you know Jesus was related to another special baby in the New Testament? His name was John the Baptist. John's mother, Elisabeth, and Jesus' mother, Mary, were cousins. John's father, Zacharias, was a priest in the temple at Jerusalem. One day, an angel appeared to Zacharias, telling him his wife would have a baby son, even though they were very old like Abraham and Sarah. The angel also told Zacharias that his son would be filled with the Holy Ghost before birth! He then foretold that many would turn from their sin and trust in Jesus Christ through John's ministry. Luke 1 tells us that baby John leaped in his mother's womb when Mary came to tell Elisabeth that she was going to be the mother of Jesus. God was preparing John to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ before he was born. What a wonderful encouragement that God can use us even at a very young age! John the Baptist grew up to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ as the angel had told his father. Crowds came to hear

him preach in the desert where he lived for a while. Then, he began preaching near the Jordan River where he also baptized many people who were turning from their sin.

About six months after John the Baptist's birth, Jesus was born. One reason Jesus was the most special baby ever born was because He was born without sin. You and I were born in sin. But Jesus came to earth as a sinless baby so that, as a man, He could die on the cross for our sin. I'm sure you know the story of His birth: how an angel appeared to Mary, how evil King Herod tried to kill Him, how shepherds and wise men came to worship Him. The Bible also tells us Jesus was an obedient child and He loved to learn. When He was twelve, Mary and Joseph found him in the temple in Jerusalem, learning from teachers and asking questions. These highly educated men were amazed at how much the young Jesus understood. As men, John the Baptist and

Jesus began preaching at the same time. John even baptized Jesus as an example to believers to show they were followers of Christ. Can you imagine how John felt baptizing the Son of God? What an amazing privilege.

John the Baptist and Jesus Christ serve as wonderful examples for children. Before you were born, God knew you and He has already planned your life! If you know Jesus as your Savior, you can start serving Him now as a young person. Pray and ask what you can do for Him today. If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, you can know Him right now. Think of that tiny, sinless baby who, later in life, died a cruel death on the cross for sin. You must hate your sin and turn away from it. Ask Jesus to save you so that you can serve Him too. ✨



Rachel Huffman
member of Lehigh Valley
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A WORD WORTH KNOWING

Faith

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the only Savior and relying on Him to be your Savior.



FALL 2020



Annalise Nymann
Indianapolis FPC



Lilyanna Seifert
Malvern FPC

Kids' Crossword Puzzle

Answers are found in: Matthew 3:1-7; Luke 1:5-80; 2:1-52; and 3:1-23 (KJV)

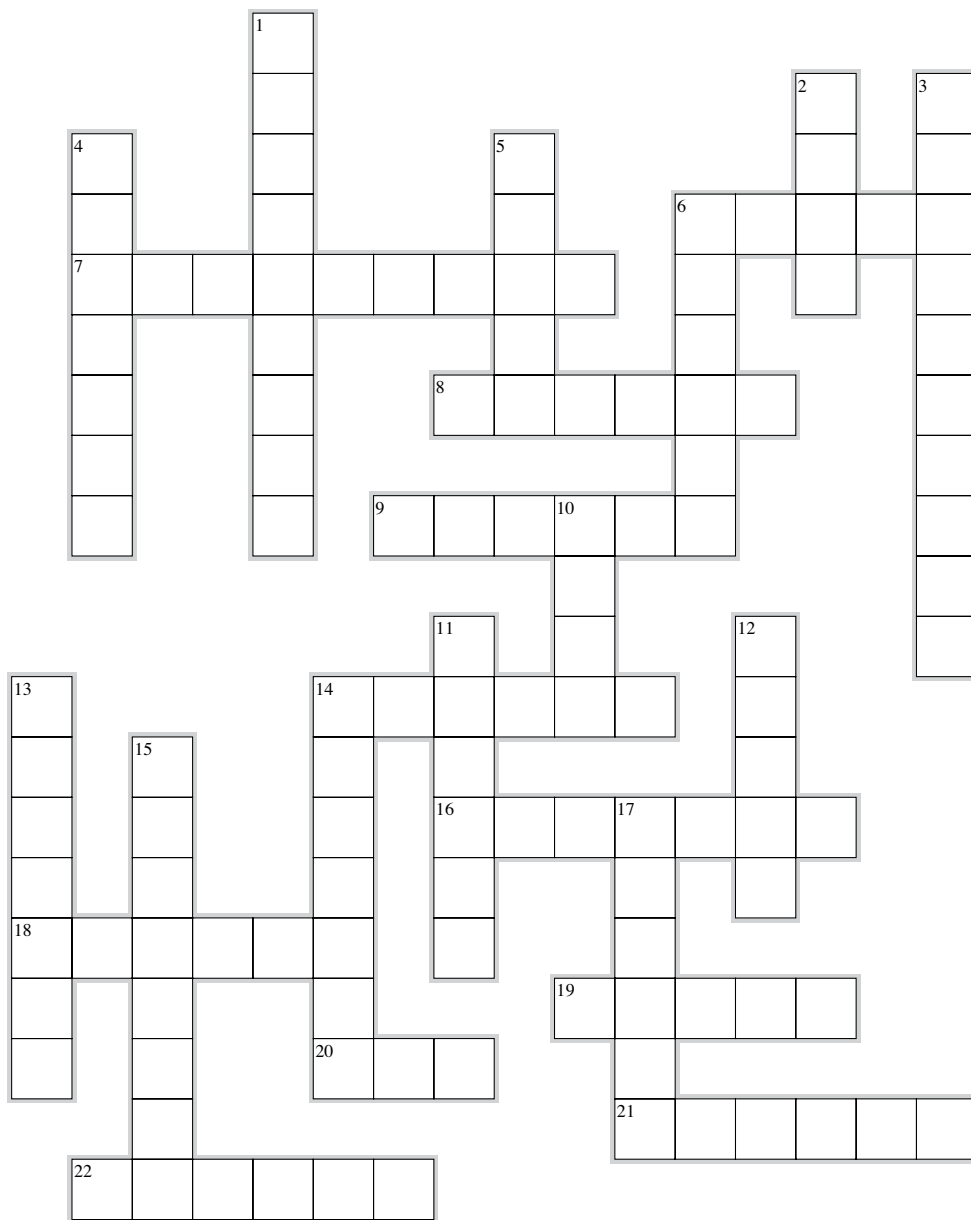
Answers must be spelled as found in the Bible (KJV).

Across

6. John the Baptist's clothes were made of the hair of this animal.
7. John's mother
8. John's father's job
9. Place where John baptized people
14. When Mary visited Elisabeth, what did the baby John do in his mother's womb?
16. Angel who foretold the births of John and Jesus
18. Prophet who foretold John the Baptist's ministry
19. Who would baptize with the Holy Ghost?
20. John was how many months older than Jesus?
21. Where did Jesus' parents take Him to offer sacrifices soon after His birth?
22. Jesus was about how old when He was baptized?
6. Elisabeth was what relation to Mary?
10. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit came down upon Him like what?
11. Bed of the baby Jesus
12. John's dessert (not desert)
13. What word does Luke use to tell us that Jesus obeyed His parents?
14. John's food
15. Jesus' hometown
17. John's main message

Down

1. Where did Jesus' parents lose Him when He was twelve?
2. Where was John when he was first filled with the Holy Ghost?
3. Where John lived
4. John told people to do what to "the way of the Lord"?
5. John baptized with what?



PLEASE NOTE: Please send your completed puzzle to Current Kids' Corner, c/o Judy Brown, 651 Ponden Dr., Greer, SC 29650, or by email to ljsbrown2@gmail.com by Feb. 28, 2021. Include your name, mailing address, email, age, and the name of the church you attend. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. The contest is open to young people ages 5-12. Winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.



Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton was a preacher of Christ for sixty years and a professor of divinity for forty. On his deathbed, he said to a friend, “All my theology is reduced to this narrow compass— Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

The Bible reveals that multitudes will never believe and be saved. They will reject Christ and be lost forever. Yet, there will be a people in whose hearts the gospel will triumph, who will come to personal faith in Christ. Jesus said concerning those He had come to save: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). What a promise!

The Grand Company of Believers: “All that the Father giveth me...” This describes those who receive the truth of the gospel—a grand company from every age who make up the number of the redeemed (Revelation 7:9). *They were given to Christ* in the great covenant of grace and redemption (John 6:39). He became responsible for them, living a perfect life, and dying a sacrificial death on their behalf. They were “chosen in Christ” and He became their Surety and Substitute. Furthermore, in time *they are given to Christ* through the Spirit’s work in regeneration. Those purchased by the Lord Jesus are brought unto Him by grace. In glory they will be presented faultless to God. Christ Himself will say: “Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me.”

The Great Coming of Believers: Jesus said that they “shall come to me.” All who were given to Him in eternal election are going to come to Him in time. Here is activity: “Shall come to me.” They will not merely come to a religious creed, to a church, a preacher, or a sacrament, but to Christ Himself! Sinners need to come to Christ. “Only Jesus can do helpless sinners good.” But how do they *come* to Christ? What does that mean? It is believing on Him, looking to Him alone for salvation (See John 6: 35, 40, 47, 49-51, and 54). “Eating His flesh and drinking His blood” are symbols of saving faith. The Lord explained in verse 35 that those who come to Him “shall never hunger” and those who believe “shall never thirst.”

There is assurance: The use of “shall” and “will” means there’s no doubt here: because of the will of the Father (vs.39-40) the work of Christ in giving His life for them (v.51), and the operation of the Spirit (v.45), these people shall come to Him!

There is also ability: How is it that such sinners do come to Christ? There is an *invitation* to come (Matthew 11:28). But there’s an *inability* to come (John 6:44). Yet, there is an *inclination* to come that is given by God (vs. 44-45, 65). Left to ourselves we would never believe, but in grace, God gives us the desire and will to come to Christ (Psalm 110a).

The Gracious Comfort of Believers: “...and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise [under no circumstances] cast out.” Not one sinner ever truly came to Christ for salvation and was refused. This is a balm for a wounded soul. Here is comfort and glad assurance for all who will trust in Jesus.

HIM THAT COMETH

Rev. Stephen Hamilton

It has been said that this text is like a dagger. You must not hold a dagger by the blade. It will wound you. Too many become hung up on the first part of the text, and wonder if they belong to the “all” that were given to the Son. This is to take the text by the blade. The handle we must lay hold upon is the promise: “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” If you come to Christ, that will be the proof that you belong to the company of the elect. How are the elect to be known? “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.” Have you come to Christ? C.H. Spurgeon commented: “It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me to trust Him to be my Saviour...the essence of faith lies in this—a casting oneself on the promise.” If you have not already done so, may God enable you to trust in Christ today!