

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the Covid-19 pandemic. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

The Minister's Message

Reflection "Not yet perfect?"

Bible reading **Philippians 3: 4 – 11**

Paul says –

4 If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

7 But whatsoever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

The title for this reflection is, "Not yet perfect?"

Do we try to be perfect? In our homes? At our work? In our lives? Does this mean that we ought to be perfect, but have not yet achieved perfection?

At first, I tried to conduct the perfect service – but soon learned that people do not mind if a minister makes mistakes, because it is something that we all do.

Further on from the passage above, Paul says *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on..."*

People who are successful in life face certain dangers, especially pride and self-satisfaction. Paul might have succumbed to both of these. He says, *"If anyone thinks he has reason to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:"*

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "pride" is described as having different meanings. "A feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction gained from achievements, qualities or possessions." or "An excessively high opinion of oneself."

There is both positive pride and negative pride. Too often some people suffer because they have mistakenly understood that it is wrong to be proud, and so they do not acknowledge their own self-worth.

Sometimes it is said, *“Don’t tell a child that they have done well, or they may become big-headed.”* We may have been taught this as a child, but I feel it is wrong thinking. We all need to know that we have done something well and that we are of worth.

However, if we exaggerate our personal achievements, then we threaten our spiritual growth.

Paul could have been very proud of his important role in Judaism. He spoke with pride about his heritage – he was *“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic, righteous, faultless.”*

Paul could have had positive pride because of his background: he had been born into the Jewish faith, he had known its privileges, and observed its ceremonies throughout his life.

He was of the people of Israel. When the Jews wished to stress their special relationship with God in its most unique sense, it was the word Israel that they used.

And Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin. That is to say he was not only an Israelite, but he was a member of the elite of Israel.

The tribe of Benjamin had a special place in the aristocracy of Israel.

A Hebrew of Hebrews meant that Paul spoke the Hebrew language as well as Greek. *In regard to the law, a Pharisee.* There were never more than 6,000 Pharisees, and were the men who separated themselves from the ordinary people, in order to keep the smallest details of the law.

“As for zeal, persecuting the church;” Paul had been so zealous, so enthusiastic, that he had tried to wipe out all the opponents of Judaism. This was something that Paul never forgot, he was never ashamed to confess that he once hated the Christ whom he now loved and served.

“As for legalistic righteousness, faultless” - here, Paul is claiming that there was no demand of the law that he did not try to fulfil.

But now Paul dismisses all these things that had once been the great priority in his life. He says, *“But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.”*

Paul insists that knowing Jesus creates a new sense of values. He had given up everything that had been of value to him as a Jew, to follow Jesus Christ.

The late Fred Craddock told the story about a missionary family in China who were forced to leave the country sometime after the Communists took over. A band of soldiers knocked on their door and told the missionary, along with his wife and children, that they had two hours to pack up before the troops would escort them to the train station.

They would be allowed to take with them only two hundred pounds of stuff. Then the family started arguing about what they should take.

“What about this vase?” It is a family heirloom, so we have to take the vase.

“Well, maybe, but this typewriter is brand new and we are not going to leave that behind.” “What about some books?”

And on and on it went, putting stuff on and off the bathroom scales until they had a pile of possessions totalling two hundred pounds.

The soldiers arrived and asked if they had weighed their stuff. *“Two hundred pounds exactly”* they said.

“Did you weigh the kids?” they were asked!!

Immediately the vase, typewriter and all the books became meaningless. Sometimes, something happens in our lives in such a shocking way that we are immediately forced to see all of life in a new way. What had previously been of great value to us means absolutely nothing.

This is what happened in Paul’s life, everything in his past life became absolutely meaningless, compared to his relationship with Jesus Christ.

How much do we value our Christian faith? Does it mean everything to us?

For Paul, knowing Christ personally lifted him to a new level. Over the years, I have been told, time and time again, that people do not know how they would have managed without their faith.

According to Paul, pressing on towards perfection means persevering in one's faith and living out the gospel. He knew that he had to be aware of his limitations, but he had committed himself to God's calling in Jesus Christ.

It is when we acknowledge our limitations, that we begin the real journey towards personal achievement. Paul says at verse 12, *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect."*

Paul always felt that he had to press on and, so that he did not let Christ down, he always looked forward to see what he had to do next. We too, even in our difficult circumstances, are *"to press on."*

Amen.

Prayer

Let us pray,

O Lord of Life,

we thank you for the gifts that you have given us – the things we do well and enjoy doing, things that bring happiness to us and contribute to the happiness of others around us.

We thank you for the gifts of others – those things they can do which we can't, the talents they have which we haven't, the skills they offer and the qualities they possess which, in so many different ways, enrich our lives.

Teach us, Lord God, to see the worth of every human being, and to understand that you have a special place for us in the body of Christ.

Loving God,

we pray for our world at the present time – the poor, the hungry, the oppressed all also coping with this pandemic.

We pray for all those who are frightened, the lonely, the hurt and the depressed. Lord, you understand how they feel, reach out and strengthen them we pray.

There are times when we feel weak and powerless, with the number of cases increasing, it can almost overwhelm us. Help us, we pray to hold on to our faith, knowing that you will strengthen us, as we persevere in our faith.

Transforming God,

help us to recognise that you can use what seems small in our eyes, to bring great results.

Teach us, we pray, that you can use us, to further your kingdom and to be a strength to others in ways that we never expect. We put ourselves into your hands.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Rona

Faith in
God
changes
everything.

All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this:

*Knowing You, Jesus,
knowing You,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, You're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love You, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire
is to know You more,
to be found in You
and known as Yours,
to possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.

Knowing You.....

Oh, to know the power
of Your risen life,
and to know You in
Your sufferings,
to become like You
in Your death, my Lord,
so with You to live
and never die.

Knowing You.....

Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mrs Christine Martin (back in Biggart Hospital)	Mrs Jean Allardyce (in Urquhart Ward, Biggart)
Mrs Nettie Clarke	Mrs Maude Smillie
Mrs Anne McRonald	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mrs Rae Beattie	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Catherine MacDonald
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs Patricia Fraser
Mrs Madge Birnie	Mr Ken Birnie
Mr George Law	Mrs Aileen Morrison

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 570200 or e-mail her at sheenachunter@hotmail.com

Sad news It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Mrs Margaret Burgess in Berelands Care Home on Saturday evening. Elsie, as we knew her, attended morning worship very regularly until her health began to fail. Our thoughts and prayers are with Wallace, Lynda and all the family. Rona will conduct the funeral for which details are not yet known.

Also we are saddened to learn of the death of Mrs Dorothy Valente who passed away this past week after a long life well-lived. We remember Nick, Lesley, Fiona, Emma and all the family and wish them God's comfort and peace at this sad time of parting.

Congratulations! Our warm congratulations go to Brown Owl Pamela Weir and her partner David on the safe arrival of their son Lyle on Tuesday 20th October. Best wishes also go to proud first-time grandparents Fiona and Raymond Weir.

NWC is open for worship To comply with guidelines, places available in the church building are limited therefore systems are in place at present for booking seats. To book a seat please either phone Sheila between **9.30am** and **12.00noon** on **Thursday** or **e-mail her** between **12.00noon** on **Thursday** and **12.00noon** on **Friday**. Her contact details are on page 6.

Salvation Army Foodbank Please remember that donations should now be left in the box in the vestibule as you come to worship. There is no longer an afternoon collection on Sundays.

Online Donations Do you shop online? If you do please remember that you can raise donations for the church at no extra cost to yourself. All you have to do is go to <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and register Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity, then shop at the many different retailers who donate through the site. Remember though, that you have to go to the retailer through easyfundraising.

You can also raise donations when you shop at Amazon. Instead of shopping at the usual site go to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and register Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity and the business will make a donation to the church on qualifying purchases.

Remember **Streaming of our morning service** conducted this week by Gary McCleary and next week by Rev. Rona Young will commence at **11.00am** then our **prayer time** starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by personal prayers.

Birthdays We have two known birthdays this week. Happy Birthday wishes go to-

27th October Millie Goudie and 1st November Cathy Rowan

Belated birthday wishes go to someone who was omitted accidentally from last week's issue. Apologies!

23rd October Betty Dunsmore



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