

## Weekly Newsletter: 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022

### Reflection: Old Truths That Never Grow Stale

By Joe Barnard

One of the many strange things about church life is that the church is a community that keeps talking about the same things. Journalists are always looking for something new to put in the headlines. Scientists are constantly working to extend the boundaries of knowledge. Even friends depend on fresh stories to keep chit chat from growing stale. And then there is the church. Week after week, year after year, generation after generation – we keep talking about the same things. Show up on any given Sunday and you will hear a preacher in the front of the room commenting on sin, faith, grace, atonement, resurrection, and eternal life. *Why do we do this?*

The answer is given in I Corinthians 15:1. Paul begins the verse saying, 'I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you'. Now it's worth pausing to think about what Paul means by 'making known'. The Corinthian Christians were not ignorant of the gospel. They had heard Paul preach many times before. They had also been reminded of the gospel several times in Paul's epistle already. So, then, what does Paul mean by saying that he is making the gospel *known* to them? The idea is not that he is presenting them with new information. Enlightenment is not the focus of the passage. Instead of revealing something new, Paul is reminding them of something old. Paul, the ever faithful pastor, knows that the most basic need of every Christian is not fresh insight, but a faithful memory. The key to abiding trust and unrelenting hope is not a hungry mind for new ideas, but a firm grasp on eternal truths.

Why is this? Why is it so important that pastors and preachers keep their congregations tethered to a handful of basic truths? Again, the answer is in I Corinthians 15. Moving on, Paul reminds the Corinthians that it was the gospel message that they both 'received' and on which they 'stand'. The latter verb is worth reflecting on more deeply. There are too many campfire talks that treat the gospel as if it is a magic formula. Many an evangelist has told a crowd that, if a person simply 'prays the prayer', he or she will be saved. At best, this is a half-truth. I Corinthians 15:1 tells us that the gospel is not just something to be believed ('received'), but something to *stand on*. In other words, for the Christian, the gospel is not an incantation that we repeat in order to be saved; the gospel is the ground which supports the entirety of our weight. Our whole existence is built on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Take that away from us and the world collapses beneath our feet. Believers do not just believe in the gospel. We live by the gospel; depend on the gospel; place all of our hope in the gospel. For us, the gospel is dearer to our souls than air, water, and sunlight are to our bodies. Paul makes this point explicitly in I Cor. 15:2 when he reminds the Corinthians that it is through the gospel that 'you are being saved'.

Here we can come full circle. We can now make better sense of why it is that the church keeps repeating old, familiar truths. We can also understand why, in the words of an old hymn, Christians never tire of hearing 'the old, old story'. On a long journey, fixed landmarks are always appreciated. No sailor tires of seeing the same old constellations that affirm that he is headed in the direction of a safe harbour. Something similar is true for us. Like the Israelites in exile, we live in a world in which there are few signs to indicate the kingdom of God on earth. We feel like foreigners who at best only partially fit into the social world around us. This experience can be disorienting. It can even be depressing. Therefore, what a joy it is to step back among God's people each week and to be reminded of familiar gospel truths, which, like signs along a road, tell us that we are headed in the direction of home.

## The Summer Appeal 2022 – Now closed

It is with thanks to God for the generosity of His people in Holyrood that the Summer Appeal total has come to **£13,836.25** for 2022. The Appeal is now closed and will be divided between the Sorsamos, Lorna Ferguson and James Stewart.

## Mission Prayer Meeting – This Saturday

We're looking forward to having our next Mission Prayer Meeting with our overseas missionaries on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August at 9am. Zoom codes will be sent out nearer the time.

## My Favourite Books

By Joe Barnard



A few in the congregation might have asked the question, 'What kind of books does Joe like to read?' August is your chance to find out.

I'm inviting members to a one-off book club in August. This event is open to all ages, men and women. In fact, my hope is to make this an annual event. Each year I'll pick one book that has had a significant impact on my thinking and invite people to come on a Sunday evening for discussion. The book this year will be *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis.

**Time:** Sunday, August 14th, 5:30-7:00pm

**Location:** HEC building

**Link to order book:** [click here](#).

## Church Barbecue – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September

Save the date! We'll be having our annual church barbecue on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September at the Newlands Centre in Romanno Bridge, Peeblesshire, EH46 7BZ. More details will be given nearer the time.

## Act Like Men, Hope Church Bingham – Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August



Joe is speaking at a city wide event 'Act Like Men' on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August from 7pm until 8.45pm. All men in the church family are invited to attend and the aim of the conference is to 'encourage each other to live for King Jesus in Edinburgh and beyond.'

There will be music from 20schemes Music and a book stall run by the Faith Mission.

Speak to Joe for more information.

## Edinburgh Theological Seminary: First Annual Day Conference

Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) is holding its first annual theology day conference on **Saturday, 10th September 2022** at Stockbridge Parish Church, 7b Saxe Coburg Street, Edinburgh EH3 5BN. The theme is 'Knowing Christ'. Speakers include Sinclair Ferguson, Jonty Rhodes, Cory Brock, and other ETS faculty.

The event is welcome to all church members and the general public. Cost for the day is only £10. Please register in advance online: [ets.ac.uk/knowing-christ-conference](https://ets.ac.uk/knowing-christ-conference)



## Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Wednesday: Prayer Meeting on Zoom at 7pm
- Saturday: Mission Prayer Meeting on Zoom at 9am
- Sunday:
  - Communion Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching. Please contact Liz by 12 noon on Thursday if you would like a socially distant seat.
  - Equip at 6pm (and live streamed)



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