"O GOD, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and give praise, ... I give myself to prayer."

(Psalm 108: 1; 109: 4)

PRAISE & PRAYER

REFORMATION & REVIVAL

THE MAGAZINE OF NORWICH REFORMED CHURCH

September-October 2008

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

FORWARD IN FAITH

'Do not fret because of evil-doers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on his faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and he shall give you the desires of your heart' (Psalm 37: 1-4).

Introduction

This remarkable piece of Scripture is more like a sermon than a psalm. Neither praise nor prayer is found in any of the verses. In fact, it would seem more at home in the book of Proverbs with its emphasis on instruction and guidance. It was composed by David near the end of his life (see $v.\ 25$). After a long, hard and troublesome pilgrimage, he looks back and marvels at God's goodness. David helps us therefore to 'go forward in faith'. It deals with the age-old issue of why evil flourishes and good suffers. More than that, God through David helps us to face and deal with the seeming injustices and inequalities of life. We are encouraged to trust in God come what may, assured that despite appearances, 'all that glisters is not gold'. So the psalm is concerned to assure us of God's unfailing care. It is all about clear heads and peaceful hearts. When we are tempted to accept disquieting events and experiences at face value, God takes us behind the scenes of His providence to reveal the mysteries of His love. The words of Jesus may be seen as a comment on the whole psalm: 'In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16: 33).

I BE CALM (vs. 1-2)

Faced by life's upsetting events, David says, "Do not fret because of evil-doers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity." In other words, don't be tormented, agitated or vexed. Keep calm and serene. Of course, this is easier said than done, as David himself would agree. He knew what it was like to be driven by doubt and despair, and to fume with anger and discontent (see *Psalms 73: 21; 77: 3*). True and sincere Christians are not exempt from such temptations. Storms in the soul sometimes sour the most spiritual. Since David specifies 'evil-doers', we must be sure not to be among them. Who exactly are 'evil-doers'? Would terrorists be at the top of the list? For some, yes, but they stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with merciless, murdering, materialistic and immoral Americans, 'Brits' and others of all races and nationalities. Despite its dramatic cruelty, terrorism is *not* 'the only evil in the world'. Terrorists do not have a monopoly on evil. Pleasure-seeking, sin-loving, Bible-scoffing, Christ-blaspheming westerners are just as likely candidates on the list. Of course, David's words cover a multitude of evil possibilities. Since we all have evil hearts by nature (see *Jeremiah 17: 9*) each of us has the potential to commit any

evil deed. Let us be sure to trust our Lord Jesus Christ to pardon our sins and purify our hearts by His personal presence. When we witness the evil acts of others, may we humbly say with the martyr John Bradford, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Besides fretfulness, David warns us against envy. We might be tempted to think that since wealth and affluence often go with dishonesty and corruption, then 'evil-doers' are happier as well as better off than we are. If our cash circumstances are difficult, we might be lured into following the financial fashion: 'if we can't beat them, let's join them.' Why would this be foolish as well as wrong? David's answer is clear and to the point: 'For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb' (v. 2). In short, who envies grass and herbs which at some time or other are to be cut down? This is a very simple but solemn lesson, as events seven years ago remind us. Think of those thousands who lost their lives in the attack on the World Trade Centre. On the morning of 11 September 2001, they went as usual to their well-paid jobs, only to be 'cut down' an hour later. Those twin towers became two terrible heaps of rubble and twisted metal! This is not to question the enormity of the terrorists' crime nor to suggest that those who died were more wicked than others (see Luke 13: 1-5). We simply observe how uncertain material security can be. Our Lord makes the same point in his parable of the 'Rich Fool' (see Luke 12: 13-21). In the light of eternity, the all-important question is: are we trusting in uncertain earthly treasure or are we 'rich towards God'? This is the issue to which David now turns.

II BE FAITHFUL (vs. 3-4)

Having dealt with his negative point, David now gives us positive encouragement: 'Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on his faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and he shall give you the desires of your heart.' In short, instead of 'fretfulness' let there be 'faithfulness'. Confident from his own experience of God's faithfulness, David exhorts us to be 'full of faith' in the God who alone is worthy of our trust. Five important truths may be highlighted.

- 1. Faith's function. We are urged to 'Trust in the LORD'. We are to make Yahweh, the Lord of heaven and earth, the source of all grace and goodness, the foundation of all our hopes. The God who promises to save us and care for us, in time and in eternity should be our only confidence. As self-confidence is a curse, so God-confidence is a blessing. Frail and sinful as we are, in soul and body, God in Christ promises to save us by His gracious power and care for us by His merciful providence. This is the message of the Gospel in general and Christ's Sermon on the Mount in particular. Our Saviour being our 'rock', we may build securely on Him whatever storms might come (see Matthew 7: 24-7). 'On Christ the solid rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand' (Edward Mote).
- **2. Faith's activity.** David says, 'Trust in the LORD and do good'. Thus saving and justifying faith shows in the way we live. Faith is the root from which the fruit of good works comes (see *Ephesians 2: 8-10*). Thus we are told that 'faith without works is dead' (James 2: 17). C. H. Spurgeon says: 'Note well the double precept "trust and do". This is the true order, the two must go together. The one produces, the other proves; the promise is to both.' In weakness we wait on the Lord in faith. With obedience we serve Him in His strength (see *Isaiah 40: 31*). There is also great practical wisdom in David's words. While we are 'doing', there's less time for 'fretting'! In short, in an age of depressive maladies, there is therapy in 'doing'. The great Puritan Richard Sibbes had this to say: 'God is pure act, always working, always doing; and the nearer our soul comes to God the more it is in action and the freer from disquiet.'
- **3. Faith's destiny.** David then encourages us with a promise: 'dwell in the land, and feed on [God's] faithfulness.' There is rich symbolism here. Thomas Scott wrote: 'The land of Canaan was considered as the sum of earthly, and the type of heavenly [happiness]. To be provided for in the Lord's land, and there to dwell under His protection, near His ordinances and among His people, was all that the genuine Israelite could desire.'

- **4. Faith's supply.** While as Christians we look to the heavenly Canaan (see *Hebrews 11: 13-16*), the Lord still promises to care for us in this world as well as the next (see *Matthew 6: 25-34; Philippians 4: 19*). While He provides for our bodies, we must avoid pampering them. He promises to meet all our *needs*, not grant all our *wants*! Accordingly, may we be guided by God's promises, not governed by our appetites. If we 'feed on His faithfulness', we shall never be discontented. Above all, we may be encouraged to know that He who gave us faith will also sustain it (see *Philippians 1: 5*). The Christian life is a 'life of faith' not 'sight'. We shall be enabled to persevere, as Moses 'endured, seeing Him who is invisible' (*Hebrews 11: 27*).
- 5. Faith's reward. David now concludes: 'Delight yourself also in the LORD, and he shall give you the desires of your heart.' If God in Christ is our chief delight, we will never desire anything of which He would disapprove. So this promise is not open to abuse! Despite appearances, we will never be disappointed. The eloquent words of the French Huguenot preacher Jean Daillé explains why: 'Let the world boast of and adore its gold, its honours, and its delights, as much as it pleases; we have that better part, which is sufficient to make us eternally happy, though we should be deprived of all other things. Christian, if the world ...denies you its leeks, and onions, and flesh-pots, it cannot debar you from that Divine light which shines on you, and which, in spite of all its attempts, will conduct you to your blissful Canaan. Faithful brethren, let us...patiently expect that blessed day, when our heavenly Father, having finished the work of his grace, will elevate us all into his glory, and put on our heads the crowns of life and immortality, which he has promised us in the eternal communion of his well-beloved Son. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the true and only God, blessed for ever, be all honour and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.'

Your friend, brother and servant in Christ, Dr Alan C. Clifford

BOOST FROM BAXTER

ARE WE ELECT? The persons for whom [the saints' rest) is designed, whom the text calls 'the people of God' [Heb. 4: 9] are 'the chosen of God from eternity' (Jn. 17: 2; Eph.1: 4). That they are a small part of mankind is too apparent in scripture and experience. They are 'the little flock' to whom 'it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom' (Lk. 12: 32). Fewer they are than the world imagines; yet not so few as some drooping spirits think, who are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when they know themselves willing to be his people.

DO WE PRAY? Take heed of being estranged or separated from God; or slacking our daily expectations of renewed help; or growing insensible of our need of the continual influence of his Spirit. When once we begin to trust our stock of habitual grace, and to depend on our own understanding or resolution, for duty and holy walking, we are then in a dangerous declining state. 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God' (1 Cor. 3: 5); 'Without me', says Christ, 'ye can do nothing' (Jn. 15: 5).

Richard Baxter, The Saints' Everlasting Rest

WHY NOT ISLAM

Channel 4's latest 'Despatches' programme (1 September 2008) provides yet another alarming reminder of the threat facing the United Kingdom. Among other revelations, our trade agreements with Saudi Arabia mean that the Government is paralysed from responding to the 'unofficial' export of extreme Wahhabi Islam from this corrupt, oil-rich despotic state. It is time to expose the evil agenda of the Islamic ideology.

1. WHY ISLAM IS NOT PEACEFUL

It is undeniable that Islam's global jihadists - some quietly, others violently - are plotting the overthrow of all we have known for centuries. They are preparing for 'UKistan' in no uncertain terms! Tragically, our secularist Government - which Islam aims to subjugate and replace in any case - is playing dangerous games by ignorantly distinguishing between militant and

moderate Islam. The only difference between moderates and militants is between those who keep their mouths shut and those who don't! The Government and other secularists are deluded by the deceptive mantra 'Islam means peace' (reinforced by the early, pre-abbrogated Sura 2: 256 and the frequently misquoted Sura 5: 32). But it means nothing of the kind! The Arabic word for 'peace' is 'salaam', the Hebrew equivalent being 'shalom'. No, 'Islam' means 'submission', submission to Allah. The only sense in which the Pax Islama could mean 'peace' is when tribute-paying non-Muslims are silenced by conquest and reduced to a state of dhimminitude or 'second class' citizenship. To properly use Sir Iqbal Sacranie's deceptive expression (used to shield Islam from its critics after 7/7) 'the Qur'an is perfectly clear', it states: 'Make war on them: ... Fight those who believe not in Allah ... Nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are of the People of the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians), until they pay the jizyah with submission, and are utterly subdued' (Sura 9: 14, 29).

2. WHY MUSLIMS ARE NOT ISLAMIC

Yes, you have read it correctly. Muslims are not really Muslims. They are properly called 'Muhammadans' - followers of their prophet Muhammad. The god they claim to submit to (the true meaning of 'Islam') is in reality the ancient pagan moon god of Arabia. For all their protestations against 'idolatry', their crescent moon symbol of Allah may be seen on every mosque. This imagined god is not be confused with the living God who has uniquely revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Since Muslims reject the true God only acknowledged by true Christians, Christians alone are truly 'islamic' since they alone submit to God! Invoking an absurd piece of Islamic rhetoric, the Lord Jesus Christ was only a 'muslim' in the sense that He, as the Son of God, submitted Himself to the will of His heavenly Father. While Jesus may be regarded as a 'muslim' in this sense, Muslims are arguably not Muslims because they fail to submit to the living God! Their hostility to God in Christ makes them strictly 'anti-muslim'!

3. WHY THE UK MUST NOT BE ISLAMIC

So, Muslims need rescuing from Islam! At the same time, the UK needs rescuing from Islam! To implement this twin rescue mission, two directives must be pursued:

- 1. Reliable information must be made available to community, educational, church and political leaders about authentic Islam. The loveless concept of Allah; the incoherence of the *Qur'an*; Islam's appeal to the baser instincts of human nature; the degradation of women involving female circumcision and forced marriages; honour killings; the killing of apostates, its bloody jihadism and a fallaciously-promised erotic paradise for suicide bombers (murderers not martyrs); all these features must not be hidden. In responding to the growing threat, our lame Government is failing to face reality. The distinction between moderate and militant Islam misses the point that *the religion itself is the source of the problem*. Indeed, no other religion on earth can claim to match the violence of the Islamic agenda. Seemingly-benign Muslim communities will always be breeding grounds from which their more militant members can recruit jihadists.
- 2. With sensitive yet courageous compassion, Christians must use all proper means to evangelise Muslims. In the process, there must be no concessions to liberal as well as Muslim denials of the deity and grace of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and only Saviour of the world. In short, the case for the pure, life-transforming faith of biblical Christianity must be courageously made. On the religious education level, the RE component of the National Curriculum must 'put the record straight'. Teachers must stop pretending that Jesus and Muhammad are on a par and that the *Holy Bible* and the *Holy Qur'an* teach similarly-positive values. Without denying that too often Christians have failed to demonstrate the compassionate virtues of its Founder, the true character of Muhammad's programme and its devastating dictates must not be hidden from our children. Yes, the Christian Gospel forbids and condemns hatred and violence. The same cannot be said of the message of Muhammad. The children of UK schools must learn the difference between the mercy of the Sermon on the Mount and the hatred of the *Hadith*. The children of Muslim citizens must also be exposed to the purity of Christ and not the poison of Muhammad. (ACC)

PRAISE AND PRAYER PARTICULARS

We extend our deepest sympathy to Maureen & family in their bereavement (A&M attended Joan's funeral at Lakenham); we rejoice at the prospect of Rosanne & Luther's wedding (18 October). Alan & Marian, Mike & Rosemary represent NRC at the Immerzeel wedding (Greetje & David) in the Netherlands (8 October). May God bless both couples as they

prepare for marriage.

The Lord's Day

REMEMBER THE REFORMER MARTIN LUTHER (Heb. 13: 7-8)

<u>Praise for:</u> The precious truth of the Gospel; God's constant care and mercy; our Reformed Bible heritage; <u>Pray for</u>: NRC vision: city bookstall outreach & Sunday School (Marian & Virginia - with Yessica, Andries, Alieke); building, school, heritage centre, etc; John Calvin Academy.

Monday

REMEMBER THE REFORMER JOHN CALVIN (Heb. 13: 7-8)

<u>Pray for:</u> Reformation & Revival in the world-wide Church; growth in UK churches; God's mercy on our Nation; the Royal Family, wisdom for HM Government and Opposition; data loss; education; immigration; terrorism threat, problems in UK prisons; youth crisis: violent crime, despair (youth suicide), drugs, drunkenness and promiscuity (HIV and other STI); evil of abortion-on-demand; the nation's families (child-abuse), the lonely; the mentally sick (high level of depressive illness); justice, peace and hope in Africa: Sudan (Darfur), conflict in Zimbabwe; Iraq, prosperity in the Third World; remember the continuing worldwide HIV and TB crisis; continuing comfort for mourners in terrorist violence and the war in Afghanistan (relatives of Allied casualties); don't forget disasters in China, Burma & elsewhere; US Presidential Election; Russia-Georgia and tensions with West; Madrid plane crash; Christian witness in post-Olympic China

Tuesday

REMEMBER THE PROTO-REFORMER JOHN WYCLIFFE (Heb. 13: 7-8)

<u>Pray for</u>: Ladies Meeting (see calendar); Frances Yeardley; Karina Potter, Christine Southgate & fam; Sheila Bailey; Cath Knight (with son Philip); Klaas Hammanij; Vandian Patel (Northants); Joanna Blakeman; Christopher Lightfoot (London); Brinda Runghsawmee (Mauritius); David Llewellyn Jenkins (Wortwell); David & Evelien Clifford (Leicester); Sjoerd van der Windt (The Netherlands); Hanneke Wiltjer & fam (The Netherlands); Mark and Susanne Birch (Kings Lynn); Nicolas (Bretagne, France); Richard Webb (Rotherham); Harry Wendt (Ommen, The Netherlands), Jack Balmforth (Southport)

Wednesday

REMEMBER THE REFORMER & MARTYR ROBERT FERRAR (Heb. 13: 7-8)

<u>Pray for</u>: Muslim Outreach in UK & world (NRC website); recent challenge on bookstall; Mark Gabriel DVD offer (230+); interest in Charenton books (*Christ for the World, Amyraut*, etc.); Jim Downie's Ministry; Assen Free Reformed Church and Tigelaar family (The Netherlands); reformation & revival in UEA Christian Union; Egyptian groups, esp. e-mailers; Revd Nigel Westhead (JCA) & fam (Pontefract); Simon & Jen Wilkie (JCA); Will Harrison (JCA); Gervase Charmley; Jonathan & Rebecca Johnson (Lowestoft); David Fox (UEA, JCA); Nick Sheldon (JCA) & fam; JCA; Abby Fox (JCA); Nick & Jo Fox & Hannah Rose; Hywel Clifford (Oxford); Rosanne Fox & Luther Chaplin (Battisford, Suffolk); William Wilson (Oulton B & JCA); Mark & Abigail Raines & William (USA); John (Lakenham); Sheila Wright & family; Joanne Naylor (currently unwell)

Thursday

REMEMBER THE PURITAN PREACHER RICHARD BAXTER (Heb. 13: 7-8)

<u>Pray for:</u> compassion for those without Christ in Hay Hill outreach; James Tidd (JCA); Daniel Freeman; Mavis Hudson (Darlington); Maureen & Richard Ringwood; Dulcie Lawson (Horsham); Hannah Vilares (Haywards Heath); John & Harriet Chipperfield (Kings Langley); Alan & Virginia Fox (& V's father Jim Smith); Edith Hargreaves; David Maclean (Oxford area); Marc, Jessie & David Vrambout (Belgium); Ranka & Daniel Kaczmarczyk (Windsor), nieces Milena & Mina and family (Serbia); John Finnie and family; Menna Eveson (Wrexham); Nancy Cunningham; Scott Stringer & family; Oscar & Lucy Pinnington & family; Vera Hendrich (Hingham); Daniel Gill; Craig Goose; Immerzeel fam (Neth's)

Friday

REMEMBER THE LOCAL PURITAN JEREMIAH BURROWES (Heb. 13: 7-8)

Pray for: Heber & Elsie Martin (Cambridge Presb. & Littleport churches); East Anglian Bible

Rally; Jean Spencer & fam (Cromer); Alan & Marian; Mike & Rosemary Q & R's mother Phyllis; Stephen, Doriet & fam; Catherine & Gary, Michael, Cameron; Pauline Howe; Georgina Hale; Sanchia Lord & fam; Basil Coles & fam; John & Jenny Radford (Port Talbot); Jeremy Humphries (Cardiff); Russell Hardy (Gunthorpe); Stephen & Julie Human & daughter Jenni (Norwich), Anne Phillips (Attleb); Tony & Len (Surrey Chapel street evangelists)

Saturday

REMEMBER THE HYMN-WRITER PHILIP DODDRIDGE (Heb. 13: 7-8)

<u>Pray for:</u> NRC bookstall; paper ads. Lord's Day worship (all pastors); Northampton Group (nd); Revd David Fraser & Scottish Churches; Revd Jan & Fransa van Straaten; Abraham, Ruth Folayan & fam (Evangelical Bible College in Malawi); Blythswood; Paul Jansen (Bonus Pastor Foundation); Middle East Reformed Fellowship; Eastern Europe for Christ; European Missionary Fellowship (Stephen's involvement); David Bond (Christian Witness to Israel); London Theological Seminary; persecuted Christians esp. in Turkey, Sudan and Pakistan; The Christian Institute; Beth Earl (UFM, Istanbul); India Link Ministries (Paul Barnes); Barnabas Fund; Dr Hazlett & Margaret Lynch (West Tyrone Voice, NI); Ely Presbyterian Church, Cardiff (David Lock); the London Hungarian Reformed Church (Istvan Salanki); Almuñécar Evangelical Reformed Church, Spain (Manuel & Krisztina Franco), Pastor Percival Tanierla (recovered from illness, ministering again) & family (The Philippines)

Church Programme

September 2008

2 4	Tuesday Thursday		Ladies Meeting (No. 8); Dove Fell Holiday Heroes (5) (No. 8, P)	lowship, Norwich (Alan).
6 7 9 11 12	Saturday LORD's DAY Tuesday Thursday Friday		Bookstall (Hay Hill) SS; Morning Service with LS (P); I Beth Earl (UFM, Istanbul), Cromer Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP) kstall (Hay Hill)	0
14 16 18 19	LORD's DAY Tuesday Thursday Friday		SS; Morning Service (P); Ladies Meeting (No. 8); JCA Mee Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP) kstall (Hay Hill)	Evening Service (P) ting (No. 20, 7 pm)
21 23 25 26	LORD's DAY Tuesday Thursday Friday		SS; Morning Service (AP); Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP) kstall (Hay Hill)	Evening Service (P)
28 30	LORD's DAY Tuesday	39	SS; Morning Service (P); Quarterly Meeting (No. 8).	Evening Service (P)

Note: Alan (with Hywel) visits the Loire Valley, France (Tours, Saumur, Nantes) 15-18 September.

October 2008

2	Thursday	Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP)	
4	Saturday	Bookstall (Hay Hill)	
5	LORD's DAY	40 Morning Service (P); Evening Service with LS (AP)	
7	Tuesday	Dutch Wedding (Mike & Rosemary, Alan & Marian attending)	
9	Thursday	Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP)	
10	Friday	Bookstall (Hay Hill)	
12	LORD's DAY	1 Morning Service (P); Evening Service (P)	

14 Tuesday 16 Thursday Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP) 17 Friday Bookstall (Hay Hill) 18 Saturday Luther & Rosanne's Wedding (Wattisham; Alan officiates) 19 LORD's DAY 42 Morning Service (AP); Evening Service (P) Ladies Meeting (No. 8); JCA Meeting (No. 20) 21 Tuesday 23 Thursday Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP) 24 Friday Bookstall (Hay Hill) 26 LORD's DAY 43 **Morning Service** (*P*); Evening Service (P) 28 Tuesday 30 Thursday Bible Study & Prayer (No. 8, AP) REFORMATION DAY; Bookstall (Hay Hill) 31 Friday

Key

P = Pastor; AP = Assistant Pastor; VP = Visiting preacher; LS = Lord's Supper B = Baptism; BS = Bible Study; SS = Sunday School; JCA = John Calvin Academy; AA = Amyraldian Association; HS = History Study; MM = Missionary Meeting; FL = Fellowship Lunch; No. 7 = 7 Woodside Park, Attleborough; No. 8 = 8 Le Strange Close; No. 20 = 20 Primula Drive

Hay Hill bookstall (first Saturday each month, otherwise Fridays, 9 am - 4 pm); Sunday School (10 am);

Lord's Day services (Eaton Park Community Centre) 11 am and 6. 30 pm.

Norwich Reformed Church

(www.nrchurch.co.nr)

Pastor: The Revd Dr Alan C. Clifford (01953-453803) Asst. Pastor: The Revd Stephen M. Quinton (01603-458240) Administrator & Treasurer: Mr Michael G. Quinton (01603-452387)

"... the time of Reformation ... Christ came ..." (Hebrews 9: 10-11).