

**Hear Christ and His Word:
A Sermon on John 5:24
by Scottish Baptist Preacher,
Peter Grant of the Songs**

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Abstract

This article provides a transcribed sermon and communion service from a collection of unpublished writings by the nineteenth-century Scottish Baptist, Peter Grant of the Songs, a hymn-writer, pastor and preacher in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for 60 years.

Introduction

In a previous journal issue I informed readers that I have had the privilege of transcribing and editing numerous sermons of the Scottish Baptist, Peter Grant *of the Songs*, a hymn-writer,¹ pastor and preacher in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for about sixty years.² This article offers another transcribed sermon from that collection.

By way of review, Grant was born in Ballintua, Strathspey, Scotland in 1783 and died in 1867. He had a considerable ministry, as Donald E. Meek, Professor of Celtic Studies at the University of Edinburgh, shows in the following description of Grant's life.

Baptist pastor and celebrated Gaelic evangelical poet. Born of small-farming stock, Grant became the precentor in the local parish church when the Haldane movement was beginning to affect certain parts of the Highlands. He was later converted under the preaching of Lachlan Mackintosh, the founder and first pastor of the Baptist church at Grantown-on-Spey. He then became an itinerant missionary. When

¹ Grant was known as Peter Grant *of the Songs*, no doubt because of his popularity as a songwriter.

² These sermons will appear in a book titled, *The Highland Herald: Sermons of Scottish Baptist Preacher, Peter Grant of the Songs* (Joshua Press).

Mackintosh left Grantown in 1826, Grant succeeded him as pastor of the church, and was formally ordained in 1829. He possessed considerable evangelistic gifts. Under his ministry and that of his son, William, the church achieved a membership of almost 300, and experienced intermittent revivals.

Grant's hymns owe some themes to Dugald Buchanan, but are noticeably different in style and content. Their main focus is the "pilgrim's progress" in the life of faith. The Christian pilgrimage is followed from conversion until the believer's arrival in heaven. Grant extols the efficacy of Christ's blood, emphasises the inevitability of death, and anticipates the joy of the eternal home. The world is depicted as a cold place, a vale of tears; the Christian Hope compensates for the sorrow of believer's parting with loved ones. The experiential emphasis is reminiscent of Methodist hymnology. Set to well-known tunes, Grant's compositions became extremely popular in the Highlands, and helped establish an enduring trend in Gaelic hymnology.³

May God use the words of this faithful man of God to revive and edify us.

"Hear Christ and His Word"

April 6, 1851, Communion Sabbath
Lecture, Forenoon

Mr. Grant
John 5:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Consider the state and condition of those spoken of in our text before they hear the Word of Christ.

1. *It is evident that those who do not hear Christ have not life.* Their condition is fixed before they hear Christ—under condemnation! Whatever they say against it, no matter, they are under sentence of death. That is their condition before they hear Christ or before they hear the Word of God. Paul traces it, not only to our own transgression. It is the old sentence passed in paradise and that sentence renewed on account of our actual transgressions. Not only under condemnation, but assigned to death, dead in himself, his very soul affections are dead, dead within, slaves of sin. Under gods and lords, many passed from innocence to a

³ Donald E. Meek, "Grant, Peter" in *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), I: 467.

state of death. Death answers for deafness and blindness. It accounts for all the deadness they use in going about the ordinances of God.

2. *What are we to understand by hearing God's Word and believing on Him that sent Him?* It implies something more than a mere rational hearing. Thousands hear Him so. It is hearing the awakening Word of Christ. It was His awakening voice that made Paul fall down on his way to Damascus. It was this voice that awakened the 3000 on Pentecost. As God is true, unless we are delivered from the state we are in by nature, everlasting perdition is our lot! Conviction is Christ's act. It may not be the letter of the Law that Christ uses, but it is the substance of the Law. Mere awakening does not confer everlasting life. It has taken away, but never conferred. It merely makes them to see their condition, and after they fall back, very little hope remains for them. How does He quicken a dead soul? How did He bring light out of darkness? It is not for you or me to answer. It is enough for us to know that such is the case. The substance of hearing the Word of Christ is coming to Him for salvation. Receiving Him is having life. Before we receive Christ we must be living souls. Power is then given to receive the Son of God. The righteousness he then received in being made alive from the dead, he then believes and receives Christ, and has everlasting life.

3. *The privilege conferred on those who hear the Word.* First, he hath everlasting life. He hath it implies more than a mere existence. If a period could be put to the existence of the soul, even that would be some hope to the damned in Hell. The true believer has everlasting existence that the glories of Heaven may be conferred upon him. It is not a reward conferred upon him merely in Heaven; he has it at present. It is the reward forfeited by the first Adam but recovered by the second Adam, Christ. It is the reward of the covenant of works merited and made honourable by Christ. It is conferred on the sinner by being disconnected with the first Adam. If no mind could describe the curse of breaking this covenant, no more can they describe the blessedness of recovering it from the second Adam. This everlasting life implies full enjoyment of God, nearness to God, the presence of God; he has access to God. It is this that is worthy of the name life. Second, he shall not come under condemnation. Because of the absolute perfection of Christ, he shall never fall under it again. He is brought to judgment, true, but the object is to be justified before men and angels. Third, the stability of his condition is that he has passed from death into life. Where is the believing on Him that sent Him? Believing on Him that sent Him is not only believing on one supreme being, but it is believing in a way which

signifies that the person has a conception of the unity subsisting between the Father and the Lord—that He was expressly sent by God. He understands the unity of purpose in the work of redemption and possesses peace of soul.

4. *Some reasons why believing and hearing confers such benefits.* First, because he is transferred from the state Adam was in after the Fall to the state he was in before the Fall. He has this life by his union with the second Adam. He is, in a word, passed from death into life. These are high privileges indeed, but they are not greater than Him who purchased them. Let us not be surprised that the obedience of Christ secured them. Consider Him on Calvary, bearing the sins of His people in His own body on the tree and you may indeed wonder at the free grace of Christ in conferring them on such vile sinners as we. But again consider for whose sake they are conferred and you will cease to wonder.

5. *The assurance given by Christ.* It seemed very unlikely to the Jews that believing on Him, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, could secure eternal life. But it is declared here by Him who cannot lie on account of His own people. Often they are tempted to sink into unbelief. We see here room for self-examination to see if we possess everlasting life, whether we are united to the second Adam. If you have not Christ, why eat and drink damnation? The happy state of the true believer is that they have everlasting life and never can be deprived of it.

Communion

I come now a solemn duty of the day. When excommunicated, it is by the direct authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and never did He pass but a righteous sentence.

1. *I debar all those who come to the Lord's Table because the church has nothing to say against them and who stand on that as a ground to come to the Lord's table.* They are not in a better condition than Simon Magus. I debar them because they keep God out of view. God says they eat and drink damnation to themselves because they can have no dealings with Christ there. They and Christ are apart. The Lord's Table does not give life; it only sustains the living.

2. *I debar every soul who has not a full reliance on Christ*—all who are not killed by the Law, for they are under the Law and the curse of the Law. Others say it is a sealing ordinance. True, but it seals them as they

are, and take care that it does not seal you to perdition. These make the death of no account.

3. *I debar all on whose mind a change came over and who really did change, if immoral before now—moral but still the same man.* No change took place in him. I debar them because he is not a child of God's because he is not born again. It was only nature that came over him.

4. *I debar all those who do not attend the means of grace.* They and Christ are strangers. If they were not, they would be where He is declared.

5. *I debar all who are not in Christ*—the swearer, the Sabbath breaker, or any of the dogs or swine spoken of by Paul in his epistles, all who violate the Law of God in life or conversation. I debar every unbeliever.

1. *I invite all those who have heard and known the voice of Christ speaking to them from every other voice among a thousand.* He is their Redeemer. I invite them because they stand in covenant relation to Him. The love of God is shed abroad in their hearts.

2. *I invite all who feel their need of Christ that He might revive, refresh, and comfort them.*

3. *I invite all those who feel their need of quickening in their souls.* They are among the living in Jerusalem. They have a view of the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

4. *I invite all those who think themselves the most sinful.* Men like me, an object of pity. I invite you on that ground because it is for the poor hungry people of God. I invite the penitent, the prayerful who wish to be conformed to Christ, who have experienced Him in the power of His resurrection, all spoken of in Matthew 5 from 3 to 13.