

The Young People's Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



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Cover Picture: *Snowy scene by Loch Seaforth in the Western Isles*; see page 13.

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Vol 76

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No 1

After 200 Years of Change

The world has changed hugely in the last 200 years. Think, for instance, of travel. In 1811 there were no aeroplanes, there were no cars, and there were no trains. If you wanted to travel some distance on land, you might have boarded a stagecoach, drawn by horses. If you left London at 7 am, you might have made it to Bristol, 120 miles away, by midnight – slow progress indeed. If you wanted to travel by sea, you would almost certainly have gone aboard a sailing ship, though if you wanted to cross a wide river, you might have found a ferryman who would row you to the other side.

But in 1811 Henry Bell placed an order for a steamship which he named the *Comet*. She was not the first-ever steamship, but she was the first to trade profitably, sailing between Glasgow and two towns further down the River Clyde, Greenock and Helensburgh. Only in 1825 did the first railway train carry passengers, between Stockton and Darlington in the North of England.

Today travel is much, much quicker. In the 17 hours it once took to get from London to Bristol you could now fly most of the way from London to Australia. But one journey has not changed; it is the journey from the kingdom of darkness – in which we are all born – to heaven.

Only those who are holy are able to enter heaven. So the question arises: How can I be made holy? Or as the jailer in Philippi put it when he became concerned about his sin: “What must I do be saved?” – the most important question anyone can ever ask, as we noticed last month. The answer must be the same today as it always has been. Whatever the exact words used, it must convey the same truth as Paul and Silas conveyed to the jailer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Travel has changed. Ways of sending information to others have changed too – with the invention of the telegraph (now itself out of date), telephone, radio, e-mail and so on. Ways of doing household chores have changed in many parts of the world; electrical appliances now do our washing, for instance, and fridges and freezers keep our food fresh for much longer. But the way of salvation has not changed. Sinners are saved through trusting in Christ, the Son of God, who became man and died in the place of the guilty.

In a world where so much has changed, we should be careful not to look for a new way of salvation. Other people want to throw off the religion of a past age. They claim it is out of date and they look for another way through life which they assume will take them to heaven, but with less effort. They are not concerned about true holiness; they do not want to deny themselves; they are not prepared to take all the teachings of the Bible seriously; they do not feel any need to be earnest in religion. They think they can safely follow the world and its ways – its music, its novels, its films and almost everything else produced by the entertainment industry.

But this is a dangerous way through life; it is what the Saviour called “the broad way”. And the broad way ends in everlasting destruction. Instead we must listen to Christ; He has not changed, and He never will. He still says: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28), for we are to believe on Him; we are to trust in Him. Then He goes on: “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”. We must obey His commands – which are God’s commands – to shun idolatry, not to take God’s name in vain, to keep the Sabbath, and all the others. We must not be half-hearted about these things. But if we do come to Christ, we will not find these commands a huge, uncomfortable burden – for His yoke is easy; He will support us in it.

Our opportunities for listening to Christ will not last long. The journey through life is short. It will soon be over; then it will be too late to be saved. Yes, life is short and eternity long. We cannot afford to trifle with our souls. Moses lived for a long time, 120 years. But he has already been about 3500 years in eternity – nearly 30 times as long as his lifetime. He has enjoyed the blessedness of heaven all that time, and it will never end. But how awful it is for lost souls in hell, who have nothing to look forward to except a future of terrible, endless punishment! Moses was serious about religion early in life; he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Hebrews 11:26). We should have Moses’ attitude to the things of the world; we should urgently use our opportunities to seek salvation.

From 1802 Thomas Chalmers was the minister of Kilmany, near St Andrews. But he did not take his duties seriously. Each Sabbath he would encourage his people to live a good life, but he himself had never learned the foundation on which a good life must be built – Jesus Christ, the crucified Saviour. He believed that two days a week were enough for the work of the ministry; he could use the other days for what really interested him: studying subjects like maths, chemistry and geology.

Then in 1808 he took seriously ill; he nearly died. During his illness he

learned two very significant facts: the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity. Now he was praying: “O God, fit a cold, dark, ignorant and wandering creature for being a minister of Thy Word”. And in 1811, with a new sense of the preciousness of time, Chalmers was asking God: “Enable me to give all my mind to Thy Word”. He was now a converted man; he had felt his need as a sinner and he had believed in Jesus Christ. The way of salvation for Thomas Chalmers was the same as for the jailer in Philippi about 1750 years before. It has never changed and it never will.

The change in his soul was obvious in his life. Previously when old John Bonthon, his nearest neighbour, called in he would find Chalmers busy. But John felt he had to tell him: “Come when I may, I never find you at your studies for the Sabbath”.

Chalmers’ answer then was: “An hour or two on the Saturday evening is quite enough for that”.

After his conversion, John always found his minister studying his Bible. John commented: “I never come in now but I find you at your Bible”.

“All too little, John, all too little,” was Chalmers’ reply now.

With the change in Chalmers’ life and with his new focus on studying the Bible, there came also a change in his preaching. And the preaching began to have an effect on his hearers. No longer was he merely telling them to be good; he was telling them how they could be good – through God’s work on their hearts. And he was pointing them to Christ.

One Sabbath in the spring of 1812, two men walked away together from church. They had heard Chalmers preach on John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. One man asked the other if anything had particularly impressed him in church, and added: “I never felt myself to be a lost sinner till today, when I was listening to the sermon.”

The other man answered: “It is very strange; it was just the same with me”. Both men believed they were converted that day.

As we have seen, much has changed in the last 200 years. If Chalmers was alive today, he could, for instance, travel around the country much more quickly. But much has *not* changed. We today need the same salvation as Chalmers received, and the two men who were converted on that Sabbath in 1812. We need to be saved from our sins in the way that God has appointed for every generation: through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible has not changed; its authority has not changed. God’s demands for a holy life have not changed. And they never will. Let us not be deceived into thinking that we may adopt a different kind of religion today. We need the same religion that godly people, who followed the Bible seriously, practised in the past.

A Promise of Good Things to Come

3. The Sin Offering

Rev J R Tallach

This is another part of a series on the system of sacrifices in the Bible. Last month's article dealt with the burnt offering.

The sin offering especially represents the great work Jesus came to carry out. Other sacrifices were offered after the worshipper's "own voluntary will", but where an Israelite was guilty of a sin he must offer a sin offering. Where a priest or rulers or any of the common people or the whole nation were guilty of sin, they must offer a sin offering or else bear the guilt of their sin for ever.

There was a basic difference in the laws governing the burnt offering and the sin offering. If it was a burnt offering, the same sacrifice was to be offered and the same ritual followed, whatever the status of the offerer – whether king or commoner, priest or people. But if it was a sin offering and the offence was committed by a priest or by all the people, the offering and the ritual were of a more substantial order than if the same offence had been committed by an ordinary member of Israel. This reflected the universal truth that, the higher the standing and the greater the privileges enjoyed by an individual, the more serious his sin. And therefore the punishment must be more severe also.

The victim in the sin offering was a young bullock. The animal in the other offerings had to be without blemish, but the sin offering had to be "most holy" or "holiness of holinesses to the Lord". Thus Christ, whose hands were clean and whose heart was pure (see Psalm 24:4), was the one to whom the sin offering pointed forward.

After the death of the animal, the blood was taken within the sanctuary and sprinkled seven times before the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place. This expressed the greatness of the sinner's guilt before God. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). Blood was also put on the horns of the altar to demonstrate that forgiveness could be sought in the court of heaven.

The rest of the blood was poured out by the brazen altar. After the fat was removed and burned, the rest of the carcass was taken and burned outside the camp of Israel.

The reason for the sacrifice is identified in Galatians 3:10: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". The curse is the curse of God. Man bore the image

of God at creation and this reflected the glory of God. Man fell under the temptation of Satan. Adam's soul was immediately separated from God and was therefore under the curse. As physical corruption begins when life departs from the body, so spiritual corruption began when the Spirit of life was removed from man by God as judge. Disorder and anarchy set themselves up in the soul.

Adam had been formed as a temple of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit withdrew when this temple was defiled. Spiritual life is dependent on the Spirit of God. The natural heart is like the brown bear, which hibernates during the winter and appears peaceful and quiet. But when Spring comes, the bear awakes and resumes its life as a dangerous animal. The natural heart may appear peaceful, but when guilt is charged against it, it is ready to attack God Himself.

When Adam sinned, his will turned from obedience to rebellion. Man's understanding became darkened, so that people will worship stocks and stones. Conscience was degraded and is no more a reliable guide to God's holy law than a drunk judge is to the laws of the land. Paul thought he was doing God's service when he was making havoc of the church of God in Jerusalem. We become as accustomed to the demands of God's law as the blacksmith's dog which sleeps by the anvil while the hammer falls and the sparks fly. When the body is dead, it decays in the grave as dust returns to dust; but the soul, continuing to exist for ever, goes on decaying – becoming worse and worse – beyond the grave.

This overview of the curse prepares the ground for considering the way of escape. The only way in which satisfaction could be made for the sinner was the death of Christ, which is illustrated in the sin offering.

Daniel Rowlands

1. The Young Preacher

Rowlands was a very popular young minister in a place called Ystrad Ffyn in Wales. It was not because his preaching was particularly good, and certainly not because the people were receiving spiritual benefit from it. They appreciated him because he had a lively character and was very friendly to everyone; and after the service on a Sabbath morning was over, he would become the leader of their games in the churchyard.

He had become a minister in 1733. To be ordained he had to travel to London, and he walked all the way. He also acted as a curate (assistant minister) for his brother John in Llangeitho. Before long he began to take his

preaching more seriously. Indeed he wanted to excel as a preacher, though at that stage this ambition arose from his natural pride. As yet the truths which he proclaimed did not have any effect on his own heart, and the people did not find his preaching attractive.

There was a godly minister called Philip Pugh in the neighbourhood who was attracting many people to his services. Rowlands was upset about this and he wanted to find out why so many were going to hear Pugh. Rowlands found out that Pugh had a stirring way of preaching and he decided to follow Pugh's example. Rowlands began to preach on texts such as: "The wicked shall be turned into hell", "The great day of His wrath is come", and, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment". Rowlands probably preached now with some degree of earnestness, and many people gathered to listen to him. Several of them came under deep conviction of sin, but at this stage in his life he had no gospel to offer them; he did not know enough to point them to the Saviour.

Griffith Jones was another godly minister in Wales. He is best known for what were called circulating schools, which he organised; a teacher would come to a district and spend a number of months there teaching people, of all ages, to read. The main purpose of these schools was to make it possible for people to read the Bible. Near the end of 1735 Jones came one Sabbath to preach at Llanddewibrefi, and Rowlands went to hear him. Jones noticed the young minister and recognised that he was proud and defiant. Obviously Rowlands did not like the message he was hearing.

Jones stopped in the middle of his sermon and began to pray for Daniel Rowlands. Jones asked God to remember the proud and haughty young man in the church, to bless him and to use him for the conversion of many souls. It was a prayer which God indeed heard; Rowlands was yet to be a highly useful preacher of the gospel.

The prayer made a powerful impact on Rowlands; at first he decided never to preach again. As he made his way home that night he heard everyone praising the preacher. Some of them said that they had never heard a better sermon than the one Jones delivered that day – which may well have been true, given how few godly preachers there were in Wales at that time. But all that was said left Rowlands feeling even more depressed.

Jones' sermon had a lasting effect on Rowlands. He was now conscious of the importance of his relationship with God; he thought seriously about sin, God's law, His justice and everlasting punishment. And all this had an effect on his preaching, for he did continue to preach. The subjects that he spoke on did not change, but he now spoke on them as someone who experienced an awful sense of sin and of its consequences. As the tears fell

from his eyes, he preached what he now felt himself. And, as someone has said, “he preached to himself as much as to others”.

Everybody soon heard that a great change had come over Rowlands. Wherever he preached, the church was now full, and even the churchyard round about was filled with earnest hearers. In many circumstances, his terrifying message might have turned the people away; but they knew that what Rowland said was true and they wanted to listen. So powerful was his preaching of the law that many fell down, apparently unconscious, both inside and outside the building.

Rowland himself still had much to learn, especially about the truths of the gospel. Some people complained to Philip Pugh about various statements which Rowlands had made in his preaching. Pugh’s answer was: “Leave him alone; he is an instrument in the hands of God and is yet but a child. His Father will teach him better by and by. I really believe that the Lord Himself is with him, and that He has a great work for him to do.”

It was about 1735 when Rowlands was actually converted; perhaps he could not pinpoint the time when he passed from spiritual death to spiritual life. Pugh had given him good advice: “Preach the gospel to the people, and apply the balm to their wounds; and show to them the necessity of faith in the crucified Saviour”.

“I am afraid”, Rowlands answered, “that I myself have not found that faith in all its fullness.”

“Preach it then,” answered the old minister, “until you find it, for if you go on in this way preaching the law, you will soon destroy half the people of the land.” There was a further change in Rowlands preaching after he himself had looked to Christ by faith. But only after several years was he able to preach the gospel in all its fullness.

Howell Harris was another noted preacher in Wales at that time. He had never heard of Rowlands until one day in 1737 when he attended a service taken by Rowlands. Harris wrote: “Upon hearing the sermon and seeing the gifts given him, and the amazing power and authority with which he spoke, and the effects it had upon the people, I was made indeed thankful, and my heart yearned with love to God and to him. Here began my acquaintance with him, and to all eternity it shall not end.”

Here is an example of Rowlands’ preaching in 1739 – just a few sentences from a sermon. He was concerned for those “who are dead in sin” and “who neither thirst nor long for the Word of God”. He went on: “They think the Word of God is enough to give life, without the Spirit of God. If they had but a Judas to preach unto them, they would be satisfied, and not a step farther would they go to hear Paul. I must say . . . that the ministers who reproach

them least for their sins and let them out of church early are the most acceptable in their sight; and they are very far from delighting in the law of God and meditating in His law day and night. . . . Many think it too soon to begin when it is time to end. As Christ was sent for to heal the ruler's daughter when she was on the point of dying, so many care not for the company and prayers of ministers till they find they are going to die. Then they wish to die with God, though they have lived with the devil. Now they cry for repentance though before they refused it."

Here was forceful preaching to people who, very likely, had never heard much either of law or gospel—many of whom had no desire for any more than a minimum of *outward* religion; they had no sense of their responsibility to seek earnestly for a living relationship with Christ. But as Rowlands' text that day was 1 Peter 2:2, it is likely that he also gave some of "the sincere milk of the word" to God's children so that they might "grow thereby".

Moses: God's Faithful Servant

2. Preparation for Leadership

Rev D A Ross

The first part, in last month's Magazine, of this Youth Conference paper gave the background to Moses' life. He was born among the Israelite slaves in Egypt and God preserved his life when Pharaoh's daughter took him into the palace and brought him up.

It is highly significant that, when Moses was born, his mother saw "he was a goodly child" (Exodus 2:2); this is also noted in Acts 7:20 and Hebrews 11:23. It seems that his parents, through God's direction, realised that he was to be somehow involved in delivering Israel from the cruel persecution in Egypt. Indeed the Lord had made a promise to Joseph, who, before his death, told his brothers: "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Genesis 50:24). So, during the time of Pharaoh's persecution of Israel, these oppressed people would expect someone to be raised up from among them whom God would use to bring about this promised deliverance. In all probability, Moses' parents discerned this in their child.

Lesson 2. There is a lesson here for parents (and no doubt many of our young friends here hope to be parents some day). Moses' parents were not afraid of the king's evil commandment to kill babies and they did their utmost to preserve their children. Yet some parents sinfully dispose of babies still in the womb. May the Lord preserve us from such a wrong! No doubt Moses'

godly parents prayed that he too would be godly; we also ought to pray that our young people would be bright and shining lights on Christ's side.

We next notice Moses leaving his position in Pharaoh's palace, a place where he could not honour God. We are told: "By faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Hebrews 11:24) – that is, at the age of 40 years, as we see from Acts 7:23. It was perhaps well beyond what we may regard as a mature age at which to make up one's mind about this important issue. But Moses' circumstances would have been vastly different to anything we might experience. Being under a powerful, ruthless and cruel king, an opportunity to separate from him would not have been easy to find. Yet an opportunity did arise for Moses to get away from a system of idolatry and unending persecution against the people of God, the Children of Israel.

Lesson 3. No doubt in the present low standard of moral and spiritual life around us, we have been, and will be, faced with pressure to take part in what the Word of God forbids. What an example we have in Moses! He refused the honour of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, because it involved what was dishonouring to the Lord. So, whatever position we may be offered in the world, let us refuse it if we cannot honour Christ in it.

In Hebrews 11, we see what Moses did after letting go all the riches, authority and praise which were his. He chose instead to associate with the Church of God, although it was small, despised and persecuted.

Lesson 4. How ready Moses was to associate with the people of God! And how ready we also should be to associate with the Church of God! Though we may be despised for doing so and lose much of the world's respect and its honours, we will not lose what really matters – the favour of God. Moses never lost God's favour in doing so, nor will we.

Indeed Moses esteemed the reproaches associated with following Christ "greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11:25). Moses believed that the reproach heaped on him for following Christ was a better form of riches than all the riches of Egypt. He was convinced that the reward for following Christ was far greater than the massive wealth in Egypt.

Lesson 5. Sadly, few people are of this sound mind; most want to avoid the reproaches associated with following Christ. Instead they choose what really matters to them – the world. They want, if possible, to obtain great worldly riches. Christ Jesus reminds us: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

From the time when Moses decided to leave the idolatrous palace in Egypt, he identified himself more and more with his persecuted brethren, the Children of Israel. At one point it came into his heart to visit them and he saw an

Egyptian unjustly beating one of them. Rising to the Israelite's defence, he slew the Egyptian.

Some people find it difficult to justify Moses for killing the Egyptian, referring to it as murder which arose from nationalist pride or unrighteous anger. Others regard it as confirmation of his future involvement in God's deliverance of the Children of Israel. It is certain that the Lord did not frown on this act of self-defence on the part of Moses. In his address to the Jews, Stephen points out that "it came into his heart to visit his brethren the Children of Israel, and seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian" (Acts 7:23,24). Moses took the lead against a persecuting and murderous nation which was deeply opposed to true religion and all who adhered to it.

Lesson 6. We should note from this that God does sanction just wars, not only in Old Testament times but also now. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* is based on the Word of God and states: "It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, *they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions*" (23:2).

Lesson 7. Moses is also an example to us to do what we can to defend those who are wronged in a righteous cause, but we do not have any warrant to kill oppressors except in times of just war. A text often quoted for the defence of the unborn baby is: "Open thy mouth for the dumb". Indeed we should do so in this and every other righteous cause.

Shortly after Moses slew the Egyptian, he saw two Israelites contending with each other. He intervened and rebuked the man who was in the wrong. He angrily said to Moses: "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" (Exodus 2:14). Pharaoh soon heard that the Egyptian had been killed and sought to slay Moses, who then fled as far away as Midian. While sitting by a well of water, seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, came to give water to their father's sheep. As they did so, some uncouth shepherds chased them away and, typically, Moses came to the defence of Jethro's daughters and watered their flock. This is an example for us to imitate in various situations.

This providence brought Moses to live with Jethro the priest of Midian, and he eventually married one of Jethro's daughters. Moses was content to live there for 40 years, following the humble occupation of a shepherd. He thus confirmed his disregard for the riches and honours of Egypt. Some writers think that Moses wrote the Book of Genesis during this period, but

one thing is sure: in God's purpose, as the 40 years spent in the house of Pharaoh were a preparation for bringing Israel out of Egypt, so his 40 years of shepherding in Midian would have helped him in the great task of leading the Children of Israel though the wilderness.

Lesson 8. The God of providence leads His people in definite ways in early life. How often they later find that this has proved useful to them in their work in the Cause of Christ!

For Junior Readers

Who Filled the Basket?

It was a very severe winter. A snowstorm was threatening in a wild part of the north of England. A farmer had left the door of his porch open. Once, when he was young, he had found someone frozen on his doorstep, and this was something he always did on wintry nights. He and Sarah, a servant, were alone in the farmhouse. Just as he was about to ask God's blessing on their supper, they heard noises at the inner door.

"Hello", called the farmer; "who is there?". There was no answer, but the noises went on. "Who is there? Speak out, can't you?" the farmer called again. When the farmer went to the door and opened it gently, a large dog with a basket in its mouth pushed it wide open. "Hello, boy, what do you want here at this time of night?" asked the farmer, patting the snow off the animal's head. Of course, the dog could not answer but it laid down the basket beside the farmer. It stood looking up with an appealing look in its large brown eyes, as it kept wagging its tail.

"What is it, old fellow?" said Sarah, "We don't know what you mean, poor doggie?" The dog looked at the supper table, and gave some quick short barks. The farmer offered it a cake, when, to his surprise, the creature took it carefully between its teeth and dropped it into the basket, asking for more in the same way. A second, third and fourth cake were thus dropped into the basket. The sympathetic Sarah, full of delight at the wise dog's behaviour, went to the door, opened it, and said, "Good doggie, go!"

But the dog did not want to go. It stayed where it was and kept barking. The farmer and Sarah decided to fill the basket; they added some cheese and bacon. The dog then picked up the basket and moved to the door.

"Stop a moment", said the farmer, "I'll write you a note, or perhaps some honest person will be thrashing you for a thief". He scribbled these words on a piece of paper to say that the food had been "honestly come by; send the dog again".

"Now then off, doggie," and the great creature sprang out, disappearing down the dark road. "I will try to find out what this means", said the kind-hearted farmer, and he went to put on his overcoat. Sarah begged him not to go out, and placed the large Bible on the table for evening worship. She knew this was the best way to keep her master back.

After prayer, the farmer could not go to bed without seeing if he could find out if any hungry people were out of doors near his house. But after walking about 200 yards against the driving snow and hail, he was obliged to give in and come home. Yet he suspected he would see or hear more of the dog and its burden before long.

He was right. The next morning the dog appeared again at the door, carrying his basket. He came in with the confidence of an old friend. "So you are not afraid to ask for another dinner", said the farmer, his face beaming with pleasure as he saw the animal again. "Have you cut that pie yet, Sarah? You might . . . But here is a letter."

And he drew out of the basket a folded piece of paper, with these words: "I do not know how to thank you, my kind benefactors, unknown to me. I didn't know the dog had gone to beg. He is the neighbours' dog; my children are very fond of it. When he heard them crying for food, he seemed to go frantic, and caught up a basket that I fetch food in, and ran off. We didn't know where, till he came back with the food that was sent, I believe, in answer to prayer. The God of the fatherless and the widow reward and bless you! Please do not think I have sent the basket for more, but only to carry the note safely."

"All right", said the farmer, "but I am not going to send back the basket empty."

Sarah had tears in her eyes. She beckoned to the dog, and it jumped up to her. It tried to lick her face, while she said, "So you couldn't bear to see the children cry, could you, you old beauty! Here is a bit for yourself".

But the dog dropped it into the basket as before. Not till he saw that Sarah had filled the basket, could he be persuaded to go. Then he made his way over a large moor near the farm and went inside a cottage, as the farmer followed behind.

The farmer paused in the doorway, looking into a neat, plain home. Then a child's voice cried out, "Mother, here's Carlo back again", and a little girl of almost five appeared at the foot of the stairs, but stopped shyly on seeing the farmer.

"Is this your basket, little one?" asked the farmer.

"No, it is mother's", the girl replied.

"Well, will you take it to her? I've filled it again, my dear."

The little girl looked wonderingly at him and asked, "Was it you that filled it yesterday? Mother said it was God, and she has been singing, 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow', all the time."

"Did she want it very much, my little dear?" said the farmer.

But the child only repeated: "She said it was God. You didn't fill it, did you?"

"Mother was quite right," said the farmer. "It was God." He was scarcely able to restrain his tears at the thought that God had thus led him to befriend one of His little ones.

But was the farmer right? Was it really God who filled the basket? Do you want to say that it was the farmer and Sarah? Yes, of course it was. But it was God who made them want to do it. God has control over everything, and He used the farmer and Sarah to provide for the needs of this hungry family in the cottage away over the moor.

The Bible says, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want [or, lack] any good thing" (Psalm 34:10). That should encourage us to seek the Lord. If we do so, will never lack anything that will really be good for us.

For Younger Readers

Mary Magdalene

F L Mortimer

The Peep of Day, by F L Mortimer, is a book for very young children. It gives simple teaching from the Bible. Over the years it has passed through many editions and has proved very popular. It has now been reprinted by Free Presbyterian Publications for the third time. The new edition has illustrations and a stronger binding. The normal price is £9.50, but until 28 February 2011 it will be available for only £8.00 if it is ordered direct from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom. What follows is a chapter from the book.

I have told you of two Marys: Mary, the mother of Jesus, and another Mary, the sister of Lazarus. But there was still another, called Mary Magdalene. She came very early to the grave of Jesus, before the other women came. She looked into the grave, but saw no angels. So she came running back and told Peter and John that Jesus was not in His grave. "I am afraid", said Mary Magdalene, "that some wicked people have taken Him away, and that we shall not be able to find Him."

So Peter and John began to run as fast as they could, but John ran faster and he came first to the grave. He stooped down and peeped in, and he saw the clothes lying in the grave.

Soon afterwards Peter came and went down into the grave. He saw the clothes neatly folded, and the cloth that was round Jesus' head lying in a place by itself. Then John went in too, and he remembered what Jesus had said about being alive again.

"It is all true," thought John, "He is alive and has left His grave."

Then Peter and John came out of the grave and went to their own house. But they saw no angels, nor did they see Jesus.

Where was Mary Magdalene all this time?

She was standing crying near the grave. She was alone, because Peter and John had gone home.

At last she stooped down and looked into the grave, and she saw a beautiful sight: two angels. One of them was sitting where Jesus' head had been, and the other where His feet had been!

The angels said to Mary, "Why are you crying?" But still she went on crying; she said, "Some people have taken away the Lord Jesus, and I cannot find Him".

When she had said this, she heard a man behind her saying, "Why are you crying?"

She did not know who it was that spoke to her. She thought it might be the gardener. She thought this man might have taken away the body of Jesus. She wanted to know where the man had put the body so that she could take it away.

The man said, "Mary!" She knew that voice. And turning round, she looked and saw that it was Jesus. How glad she was to see her Lord and Master, whom she loved!

But Jesus could not stay with her. He told her to go and tell His dear disciples that He was alive. "I am soon going up to My Father in heaven, but I shall see My disciples first."

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples. They were all crying, but they would not believe what Mary said.

Mary was glad that she had gone to look for Jesus. She was the first of all the people who saw Jesus after He was alive again.

Sudden Death

Rev Donald MacLean

This article is reprinted, with editing, from the June 1950 issue of this Magazine. While it is true that far fewer people die young today than was the case in the past, even 60 years ago, it is foolish to think it cannot happen to you.

A remarkable feature of the present time is the number of sudden deaths which both startle and sadden the communities and the families which are affected. Persons who seem to be in good health, and going about their work in the usual way, are suddenly struck down, not only in their homes, but also in public places.

No age group escapes this calamity; it happens to young people as well as to those who are older. They are suddenly, and without warning, sent into eternity. While this is very sad, it is also unspeakably solemn. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more" (Psalm 103:15,16).

Many instances of sudden death overtaking individuals and communities are recorded in God's Word. On one occasion a whole generation, apart from one family, was swept away by sudden destruction. Referring to this event, the Lord Jesus Christ unveils before us the spirit of that age: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:38,39).

They were bathed in the spirit of utter worldliness. They lived only to satisfy the flesh with its affections and lusts. The fellowship they enjoyed and sought was that of the world. The warnings of Noah, the preacher of righteousness, fell upon deaf ears. Death, eternity – and God, the Judge of all – were matters to which they gave no thought, or else they considered them of no importance "until the flood came and took them all away".

It does not need much spiritual discernment to see that we live in a generation which breathes the same spirit. The great concern for the provision of all that may lead to earthly happiness, coupled with the almost universal disregard for the things of eternity, tells us plainly that, as a generation, we know very little of the love of God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15,16).

Living and mingling as we do with such an evil and perverse generation,

we are in constant danger of adopting their principles and living in forgetfulness of our latter end. But the frequency of sudden death should awaken us from such a delusive sleep and should add special force and solemnity to the Saviour's warning: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

We must be ready when death comes. It is a solemn fact that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Hebrews 9:27). You are rapidly hurrying on to the great white throne to meet the Judge of eternity. And as death finds you, so shall you appear before the judgement seat of Christ.

God's Word makes it abundantly clear that every one of us needs to be prepared for that day. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and if we die in our sins the Judge will pass a sentence of condemnation against us, and eternal death will be ours. From this there can be no escape, our own consciences and God's Word being witnesses, unless we are clothed that day in the righteousness of Christ.

The Lord Jesus glorified the Father by finishing the work which was given Him to do and so wrought out a salvation for sinners. In it there is a God-provided and God-honouring preparation for that day when time shall be no more, and the dead, small and great, shall stand before God. All who are brought, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to a saving knowledge of Christ – who seek Him and find Him – are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. Their sins, which are many, are forgiven them; they are accepted as righteous in God's sight, adopted into His family and, when death comes, are made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into the presence of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not" death may come. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Such solemn words should make us very careful of what company we keep and what places we spend time in. Surely you would tremble to think that death might find you in some place where you should not be. To spend one moment in the company of light and frivolous friends, with the sound of music or loud applause in your ears – and the next moment in endless woe, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! How dreadful and how solemn! Yet, how often it happens! "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:40,41). "Therefore be ye also ready."

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2011-12

UK Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Dingwall:* Andrew and Ruth M Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh and Catriona Logan, Isla Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Kate Gillies, Ruairidh Macleod, Peter Macpherson. *King's Lynn:* Joanna and Matthew Wiltshire. *London:* Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Lucy and Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome.

Intermediate Section: *Barnoldswick:* David J Martin, Rebecca Ross. *Broadstairs:* Edward Martin. *Chippenham:* Jessica Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Graham MacLeod, Finlay Murray. *Edinburgh:* Daniel Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Callum Macpherson. *Haywards Heath:* Joseph Woodhams. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew Munns. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *Sidcup:* Jemima and Jeremy Turnbull. *Snizort:* Rebecca Macleod. *Staffin:* Neil A Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Iain Boyd, Cirsty Gillies. *Swavesey:* Matthew and Robert Parish. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Nathan Broome. *Vatten:* Jayne-Anne Fleming.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Broadstairs:* Oliver J Martin. *Chippenham:* Rosie Salkeld. *Dingwall:* William Murray. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Kenneth Macpherson, Emma Norris. *Haywards Heath:* Joseph Woodhams. *King's Lynn:* Susie Wiltshire. *London:* Sam Munns. *Ness:* Joanna MacLean, Kathryn Ferguson, Johan MacInnes. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell. *Point:* Isla MacDonald. *Sidcup:* Joseph Turnbull. *Snizort:* Sarah Macleod. *Stornoway:* Aimee Macleod, Ryan MacSween. *Tonbridge:* James Playfoot.

Upper Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Rachel Somerset. *Broadstairs:* Claudia and Miles Martin. *Dingwall:* Laura MacLeod, Hannah MacKenzie, Alasdair and Donald Murray, Matthew Ross. *Edinburgh:* Mark Mackenzie. *Gairloch:* Roddie Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Katie MacPherson, Rachel Smith. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *Haywards Heath:* Lucy Woodhams. *Inverness:* Daniel Maton. *Kyle:* Sarah J Whear. *London:* Claudia and James Campbell, Henry Munns. *Ness:* Jonathan Maclean. *North Tolsta:* Anna Campbell, Catriona and Christie Nicolson. *Sidcup:* Annabelle and Henry Turnbull. *South Harris:* Cameron MacLeod. *Stornoway:* Lucienne Doig, Cara MacLeod. *Tonbridge:* Katie Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Abigail Broome

Lower Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Samuel McIntosh. *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen. *Chippenham:* Timothy Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Deborah MacLean, Esther and Lydia Ross. *Edinburgh:* Sarah and Paul Mackenzie, Bradley and Fraser Morrison. *Garrabost:* Duncan and Susanna Macdonald. *Glasgow:* Iain and Hugh Macpherson, Rebecca Smith. *Inverness:* Jessica and Victoria Maton. *Kings Lynn:* Thomas Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Mark Whear. *London:* Rachel Campbell, David and John Munns. *Ness:* Catherine Thomson. *North Harris:* Hannah Jardine, Cara and Connor Macdonald, Neil Morrison. *North Tolsta:* Ross Campbell, Ruth Morrison, Beth Nicolson. *Sidcup:* Julius and Max Turnbull. *Snizort:* Jonathan Macleod. *South Harris:* Jessica Ann Macleod. *Stornoway:* Jamie Doig, Coinneach Macleod, Fraser Macleod, Matthew Macleod, Kate and Mollie MacSween.

Looking Around Us

At the End of Life

I had never heard of Gerard Kelly until news of his death was splashed over the front page of my newspaper some weeks ago. He was an actor from Glasgow who seems to have been very popular. But the less interest people take in the activities of actors the better.

What does their work involve? It requires them to pretend to be someone

else, possibly someone who never existed. It means that they have to try to take on a personality which is not their own. They must speak words which they do not mean. There is a falseness about it all which is completely opposite to the spirit of the Ninth Commandment. So no one should become involved in acting, not even on an amateur level. And equally people should not be watching plays or films – whether on stage or in a cinema or on television. Apart from the falseness and the insincerity that is involved in producing them, how can anyone claim to watch these plays and films to the glory of God, especially when they glorify sin?

On the back of the order of service at Kelly's funeral, there was a picture of him with the words: "Bye bye, pals. . . . See you later." This was what he used to say at the close of a show. No doubt Kelly would have used the words humourously; now there is a very solemn note about them.

On the one hand, when someone dies, "See you later", becomes a promise it is impossible to fulfill. We will never again see that person in this life. And death is the end of all our opportunities to find salvation from sin, and from its consequences in a lost eternity. Death brings to an end our opportunities to believe in Christ and to enter on the way to heaven.

On the other hand, we *will* all see each other again – before the judgement seat of Christ. There we must give account of all that we have done in this life. Have we glorified God? Have we taken life seriously, as an opportunity to find salvation and to prepare for eternity?

God is serious when He calls us: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6,7). So we should be serious about life and about its opportunities for finding Christ, and salvation through Him.

Many people think that entertainment provides the best hope of happiness in this life. It does not. The best life, in every sense, is one lived by faith in Jesus Christ, seeking always what is most to God's glory.

2011 Youth Conference

This year's Youth Conference will be held, God willing, in Carbisdale Castle, near Bonar Bridge in Sutherland, from Tuesday, April 12, to Thursday, April 14. We expect that further details will appear in next month's magazine.

Price 70p