

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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Job's Love for God's Words

Job suffered a terrible series of troubles. First a band of men fell on his oxen as they were ploughing in the fields, and on his asses, which were feeding nearby; then the men took these animals away and killed almost all the servants who were looking after them. Soon afterwards lightning destroyed Job's sheep and almost all the servants in charge of them. Then another band of men carried away Job's camels and killed almost all the servants who were with them. And a great wind blew down the house where Job's sons and daughters were having a feast, killing all of them. Finally, terrible boils broke out all over Job's body.

It all happened so quickly. But his trust in God was not shaken. Even when his wife told him, "Curse God and die", he spoke respectfully about God. His answer was a question: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" He knew that they had received many good things from God over the years, and now, even when disaster had struck, he believed that God was still in control.

The Bible gives us God's verdict: "In all this did not Job sin with his lips". How easy it is to speak sinfully, especially in a difficult situation! But Job spoke wisely; he was a godly man. He knew that God was to be trusted no matter what happened, even when Job himself did not understand properly the reason for these terrible things.

After they heard what had happened to Job, three of his friends came to comfort him. But they did not understand his situation. As they thought about the sad events that Job had experienced, they decided that God was punishing him because of some sin or sins he had committed. They assumed that no one could be in his position unless he had done something very bad. Job, they assumed, must have committed some very serious sins. And as time passed, they became more and more severe in the way that they accused Job. Yet Job knew he had a clear conscience; he had done nothing that anyone could accuse him of.

When we read the Book of Job, it may not be easy for us to realise quite how difficult everything was for him. *We* can readily understand from the

Bible account that God had given Satan a mysterious permission to make things difficult for Job – even beyond the usual way that Satan tempts people everywhere. We can also learn how the whole matter ended, with God revealing Himself as very much Job's friend. And in the end, God made clear to his friends that, in spite of what they thought, Job was indeed an upright, godly man. Yet Job did not know these things; he could not really understand what was going on; he had to walk a lonely, dark path.

Although Job did not know all the things that we know – although he must have felt very sad and unwell and he must have found it very difficult to listen to his friends accusing him – he still trusted God. While no part of the Bible had been written when Job was alive, he did know about God. God had spoken to him. And Job very much appreciated what God had said – so much so that Job told his friends: "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). Job knew that he needed food, but he believed that the words of God were even more important for him. Probably he had never felt God's words so valuable as in this terrible situation, when he had lost all his family, his servants, his animals (which would have been almost all his wealth) and his health.

Job has some remarkable things to say – and he could not have spoken as he did unless God had spoken to him and taught him. Did Job think that God had forgotten him? No, he did not. He had this to say about God: "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Though so much was hidden from Job, he knew that God was testing him. Yes, it was as if Job was in a very hot fire; yet he could see that God was working like a goldsmith. When the goldsmith is finished, he brings out much purer gold from the furnace. So, Job realised – because God had taught him by His words – that when God was finished with him, he would be purer than ever he had been.

How much better off we are than Job was! We have the complete Bible; Job did not – though, as we have noticed, God had spoken to Job and taught him many things. Have we learned to value God's Word? Can we honestly say that it is more precious to us than our necessary food? Of course, we cannot do without some food. There may be many kinds of food we enjoy but which we can do without, but we will not live for long if we do not eat anything. But God's Word is even more important; we need it, not only so that we may live to God's glory in this life, but also so that we may know the way to heaven. If we do not believe what God is telling us in the Bible – and especially if we do not trust in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Bible – then we will not get to heaven when we die; we will be sent away to a lost eternity. What a terrible prospect!

Suppose you had lost your only Bible, what would you do about it? If you had no food in your house, I am sure you would make every effort to get some. Would you make every effort to get another Bible? Remember Job, who valued God's words above his necessary food, and ask God to make you understand how valuable your Bible and its teachings really are.

But I assume you do have a Bible. Do you value what God is saying to you in it? Do you remember the words of the Saviour: "Search the Scriptures"? If so, do you obey these words? Do you search the Scriptures in the hope of finding "eternal life" in them?

What does it mean to find eternal life in the Bible? It means so to receive the testimony in the Bible about Jesus Christ as the Saviour— the One who died in the place of sinners – that we believe in Him. No one who believes in Him will perish; they will have eternal life (see John 3:15). If we are serious about the danger of going down to a lost eternity because of sin, then we will seek for salvation; we will search the Scriptures; we will read them carefully in the hope of understanding what they say about Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners.

It is not enough to know the facts about salvation. Not only must we believe the facts about Christ; we must *trust* in Him. But by nature we are unwilling to trust in Christ. So, as we search the Scriptures, we should be praying to God, asking Him to make us willing and able to believe in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour for sinners like us. The future may bring many difficulties. If we know God and love His Word, we will receive support and encouragement which can be found nowhere else – from, for instance, this promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". What precious words!

In 1846 a man called John MacLeod was born in Scourie, in the far north of Scotland. When he grew up, he went to sea and eventually became the captain of a small ship. When he was about 44, he became unwell and lived out the rest of his life in a village near where he was born. A few years later he gave useful, enthusiastic support when a Free Presbyterian congregation was being established in that area.

When, after he died, someone wrote about his life, there was not a great deal more that could be said, except that he was a godly man who loved the Word of God. The writer mentioned three matters that struck him about John MacLeod. Two of them were: "his love for the true people of God, and his earnest desires and untiring efforts for the progress of the cause of Christ". But what he put first was: "his genuine love for the written Word of God". No doubt John MacLeod understood why Job could say, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food". May God teach us all how precious are the words of His mouth!

Abraham – The Friend of God

6. The Friends of God Live by Faith and Die in Faith

Rev Neil M Ross

This series of articles is based on a paper given at a Youth Conference, and is intended to highlight some lessons to be learned from Abraham's life. In Part 5 we saw that the friends of God are worshippers of God, as Abraham was.

We noted earlier that Abraham is famous for his faith and that we too must have faith. Without it we cannot please God or be among His friends. Faith in Christ is absolutely necessary if one is to be reconciled to God and begin living a genuinely Christian life.

Every true Christian not only has this initial faith, believing in Christ for his or her salvation, but also goes on looking to Jesus and trusting in God. We always trust a good friend; how much more does the believer trust God always. Romans 1:17 says, "The just shall live by faith", that is, they continue, on the whole, to live in dependance on God, seeking always to obey such commands as: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever" (Isaiah 26:4), and, "Trust in Him at all times" (Psalm 62:8).

Abraham lived such a life – he constantly trusted in the Lord for guidance, provision and protection. How did Abraham know when to move from one place to another? By God directing him. God later said, "I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan" (Joshua 24:3). We are also told that Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8), but that is entirely consistent with God leading him, for he went on stage by stage depending on God to direct and protect him.

The true Christian similarly trusts in God to supply his needs, guide his footsteps and shield him from evil. God will certainly direct us if we pray, "Teach me the way that I should go". He will not fail to fulfil His promise, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

But someone may ask, Is it not true that godly people sometimes give way to unbelief? Sadly, yes. Even Abraham more than once gave in to unbelief. For example, when there was a famine in Canaan, he did not trust God to provide for him but went away to Egypt. Then he was afraid that he might be killed by any powerful Egyptian who would wish to take his wife from him. Instead of trusting in God to shield him, he resorted to giving the false impression that Sarah was not his wife but just his sister.

It would seem that Abraham's faith was also faltering when he took Hagar, Sarah's maid, as a secondary wife. He mistakenly hoped to have, through her, the son that God had promised him.

Some 20 years after the incident in Egypt, Abraham gave way to unbelief again, when he moved to Gerar. There, instead of trusting in God for protection, he gave way to fear and mistrust, thinking, “They will slay me for my wife’s sake”. So he resorted to his former tactic of pretending that Sarah was not his wife but his sister.

We know that unbelievers, because they do not trust in God, will have, not a blessing, but its opposite, as we see in Jeremiah 17:5: “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm”. But believers also, when they fail to trust in God as they should, may bring trouble upon themselves.

When Abraham was in Egypt, Pharaoh, king of the country, took Sarah away from him. Pharaoh believed she was just Abraham’s sister. But when the king was prevented by God from marrying her, he returned her at once to her husband. Abraham now had the humiliating experience of being rebuked by a heathen king for his deception, and no doubt he returned to Bethel feeling ashamed of this deception and his lack of trust in God.

Notice also the trials Abraham had because he took Hagar as a secondary wife. A son was indeed born to him by her, but he was not the promised son and proved to be a source of much trouble in the family.

Likewise in Gerar, Abraham lost Sarah to King Abimelech, who took her to be his wife. But during the night, God appeared to Abimelech and forbade him to marry her or even to touch her, so the king hastily returned Sarah to Abraham. Again Abraham experienced the shame of being rebuked by a heathen king for his deceit.

The friends of God today, even although they are believers, have to confess with shame that they sometimes give way to unbelief instead of trusting in the Lord. Although they know that “blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:7), they sometimes let mistrust get the upper hand. But they are taught by the Lord to be on guard against unbelief – a lesson that has to be learned repeatedly.

Another lesson is this: when we go our own way instead of trusting in God, one wrong step often leads to another. Abraham, although told by God to remain in Canaan where he would have provision and protection, decided to go to Egypt. But his wrong step of mistrust led to him using deceit to keep himself safe. Just as one stone thrown into a pond causes ring waves to go out one after the other across the surface of the water, so one sin can often lead to other sins – and these sins involving others.

In nineteenth-century England, a man condemned to death for murder confessed that his downward course began when he decided to ignore his godly parents’ instruction to keep the Sabbath day holy. How tragic for anyone to have to say at the end of life: “How have I hated instruction, and my

heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" (Proverbs 5:12,13).

Let us therefore be followers of the friends of God. The instances given of Abraham being overtaken by unbelief are given for our warning and do not in any way cancel the fact that Abraham was "strong in faith, giving glory to God", that his life was indeed a life of faith, that he truly was the friend of God, and that he (like the other believers in Hebrews 11) "died in faith" (verse 13).

Today, Abraham, as to his soul, is in heavenly glory. May we all have the hope that, when we leave this world at the end of our journey, we shall depart to be with Christ, which is far better, and experience the full enjoying of God to all eternity. Such will be the never-ending happiness of all the friends of God, because they lived by faith and died in faith.

God's Providence

4. It Is Mysterious

Rev W A Weale

The main points in last month's article were that God's works of providence are holy and wise and powerful.

God's works of providence are *mysterious*. We spoke already of "the mystery of providence", and when we use the word *mystery* we mean that there is a depth to providence beyond what we can fathom. So we often have to speak of an event as "a strange providence". This points to several things as we attempt to interpret providence.

1. We must exercise great care in interpreting providence. We have many examples in the Bible of people making mistakes here. Job's friends assumed that, because he was suffering so greatly, he must have been guilty of some great sin. How wrong they were! Professor John Murray, in his *Collected Writings*, vol 3, has a sermon on Job 23:10-12, in which he states that "when we are thinking of particular forms and manifestations of evil . . . we must make certain distinctions . . . to guard . . . from confusion and distortion". He then goes on to state four of those evils:

(1) There are evils that are directly in the nature of punishment and therefore express the justice of God against those ungodly persons who suffer those divine judgements.

(2) There are evils that are directly chastisements. Such evils are inflicted upon the people of God for their instruction, reproof, correction and sanctification. Those evils flow from the love of God, and God's purpose

is to conform His children to His will. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"

(3) There are evils inflicted upon the people of God whose main aim is not chastisement. They can be explained by God's purpose to demonstrate the genuine honesty and piety of His people.

(4) There are sufferings which God's people endure as means that He has ordained to promote the gospel. This is surely what Paul speaks about to the Colossians: I "rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church".

Professor Murray goes on: "It is in the third category that the sufferings of Job find their place". He then explains that they were evils inflicted upon him to show that Job was upright and that God was acting in an honourable way. But Job's friends, and even Job himself, interpreted events wrongly.

No doubt when Jonah saw a ship in Joppa ready to sail to Tarshish, he thought how suitable this was for him; providence seemed to be smiling on him and would soon take him well away from Nineveh. How wrong Jonah was! Rather it took him, as we know, into the whale's belly. His trouble was by way of chastisement.

And how sadly wrong the enemies of Jesus were when they concluded that He was a sinner Himself, because He ate and drank with sinners. Great care is needed in interpreting providence.

2. We must never try to interpret providence without referring to God's Word. Thomas Boston comments well on this: "Whoever would walk with God must be due observers of the Word and providence of God, for by these, in a special manner, He manifests Himself to His people. In the one we see what He says, in the other what He does. These are the two books that every student of holiness ought to be much familiar with. They are both written by the one hand and they should both be carefully read by those who would have, not only the name of religion, but the thing. They should be studied together if we would profit by either, for, being taken together, they give light one to the other. And as it is our duty to read the Word, so also it is our duty to observe the work of God."

We have many examples in the Bible of people failing to do this. Absalom knew that David was the rightful king in Israel, and yet he defied God's word because providence seemed to favour him. The same was true later of Adonijah; he knew that God had chosen Solomon to succeed David and yet tried to take possession of the throne. Balaam was clearly told by God not

to go with the King of Moab's messengers, but he went anyway – in case God would change His mind and he would lose out on a reward! And Jonah, good man that he was, ought to have gone to Nineveh, for he was clearly commanded to go there, whatever his own thoughts.

What lessons there are here for ourselves! For example, in providence you may get the offer of a good job in a place where there is no gospel witness for miles around. If you were to take it, there is one of God's commands you would not be able to obey: He tells us not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together". So you must consider very seriously if you would not be better to go to some other place where a sound gospel witness exists – unless, of course, you have been clearly sent there to be a witness.

Fountain of Hope at Ingwenya

Many of you have read books about our African Mission and missionaries: such books as *Life and Labours of Rev J B Radasi*, by Mrs M MacPherson, *James Fraser – A Record of Missionary Endeavour in Rhodesia in the Twentieth Century*, by Rev Alexander McPherson, *John Bonyana Radasi, Missionary to Zimbabwe* by Jean Nicolson, and *A Heart for Africa – The Story of Jean Nicolson, Missionary in Zimbabwe*, by Dolina MacCuish.

Another is now added to the list – a most interesting new volume called *Mfundisi Tallach – A Man with a Burden for Souls* by Catherine Tallach. It is the story of the Free Presbyterian missionary, Rev John Tallach, whose work in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was much blessed. He often wrote articles for *The Young People's Magazine*. The book quotes from one such article, written in 1936, in which he speaks about the new dormitories for the boarding girls at Ingwenya School, who were tasked with giving a name to each of their dormitories. He wrote:

"Judging by the keenness of the discussions and the length of time taken before names were decided upon, they did not find it easy. But when the names came along I found them so interesting that I made up my mind to tell you something about them.

"The first was *Mthombothemba* – which sounds nice with its two t's, two b's, two o's and three m's. This is the reason that it sounds so pleasant to the ear. But its meaning is even more beautiful, for it means *Fountain of Hope*. You never saw a name like that on a house, did you? Hope, as you know, is looking forward to something, and is often used this way when there is some break with the past and there is new life. Now, does not the Mission, with its

many good influences and with the gospel, offer an opportunity for a break with the past and does it not offer hope of a brighter future for these girls?

“*Fountain* is a full, free-flowing supply of refreshment, and that is what Christ is becoming to the African people. His Word, His gospel, the Mission, under the influences of His Spirit, are all fountains full of hope, and some of these girls are setting their faces towards these fountains.

“The second name was *Indluyokuthaba*, meaning *Happy-home*. . . . They are seeing what an ideal home ought to be like: no drunkenness, no fighting, no witchcraft, no superstitious fears. A home where God is honoured, His Word read daily, His praise sung, His help sought in prayer, His means attended, His day kept and mutual love encouraged. A home without hunger, nakedness, flies and filth. A home with the sound of joyful news of the gospel, plus good schooling so as to make the best use of the physical, mental and social gifts which God has given.

“The third name chosen was the wonderful name of *Esiphumulweni* – or *House of Rest* – the place of rest. Let us go into the heart of the name. We rest after labour, and the thought also includes such things as freedom from anxiety and protection from dangers. And rest in the best sense is for the soul as well as the body. . . . All of you remember the great text that speaks of *rest*, and who it is that says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest”. And is it not the work of missionaries to tell people of this offered rest? I am almost sure that this was the chief reason for giving this name. In any case, I know of three girls belonging to this house who last year sought and found this rest.

“The fourth name was the strangest name of all – *Esilugwini*. When I first knew its meaning I had to smile, for it means the *Calves’ Kraal* or *Calves’ Enclosure*. The girls in this dormitory are all younger ones. They have been separated from the older, bigger girls in case they are taken advantage of. A mother in Scotland may call her baby, “Little lamb”, but here, instead of “lamb”, it is “calf”. Such a name, *Esilugwini*, is not only suitable for a house, but especially on a Mission station. When Jesus drew children to Himself and made some space between them and the grown-up people, did he not give the children a privileged place? He made a lamb’s fold about His knees. Then remember that it is written that He shall carry the lambs in His bosom. By His Spirit, Jesus is with us and it is our privilege here to be a means of leading these lambs to His bosom or fold or kraal. Now is that not a sweet thought?

“But what about yourselves? Have you been gathered to this strong and tender fold yet? Young as you are, you are in danger from sin and Satan. Young as you are, you must get a new heart and lie in the bosom, or live in the fold, of Jesus.”

(Rev) N M Ross

For Younger Readers

The New Boots

One morning, a farmer came home and told his wife, "I must have a new pair of boots. These I have now have got to the stage where I shall have wet feet when it rains."

But they did not have any money to spare. They had several children and *they* needed food and clothes, which all cost money. And they needed shoes for their feet too.

So what did the farmer and his wife do? They prayed to God. They asked Him to give them the money he needed to buy new boots.

A few days later, the farmer came in from the farm in a great hurry. It was time for breakfast, but he told his wife that he could not wait. He was carrying a sack and he rushed outside again, jumped on his bicycle and pedalled to the town two miles away.

What was in the bag? The man who grew corn in the fields on the next farm was afraid that wood pigeons would eat up his corn. So he shot lots of them. The farmer was allowed to take those that fell on his own land. So he went out with a sack and gathered up 24 wood pigeons. He put them in the sack and went away to sell them.

A butcher in the town was glad to buy them all. Then the farmer had just enough money to buy a new pair of boots. He knew now that his feet would be dry, even if there was heavy rain.

What did he do when he got home? He and his wife thanked God together for giving them what they needed.

We should ask God for everything we need. And we should thank God for everything He gives us.

The Old Ploughman

4. Going to Heaven

George Medway was getting old and went to live with his son in a town some distance away. There he met John Dean, who brought him to church. During the sermon he became absorbed in what the minister said, and the Holy Spirit blessed the truth to him. His conversations with George left the minister convinced that a real change had, by God's grace, taken place in the old ploughman's soul.

For five years after his conversion, George continued to grow in grace and in knowledge. Then his health began to fail. One day, his minister went to see him and asked, "Are you suffering much?"

“Yes, my sufferings be great,” George replied, “but not so great as the sufferings which my dear Saviour suffered for me. When He was suffering for me, He was forsaken, but the Lord does not forsake me. He was on a cross, but I be on a good bed. He was mocked when dying, by the wicked, but all speak kindly to me.”

“You are not afraid to die?”

“Why should I be? I got upon my heart yesterday this blessed verse: ‘Because I live, ye shall live also’. I long to see my dear Saviour and be like Him and be with Him for ever.”

“Then you have no doubt about going to heaven?”

“Why should I, when Jesus Christ says, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out’?”

“Then you consider heaven as you future home?”

“Yes, I do, and I believe my dear Saviour is waiting to receive me. This comforts my heart.”

George had to stay in his room for the whole of that winter, but when spring came, his health improved. And when summer arrived, he started going to church again; he called it “the gate of heaven to my soul”. The last time he was in church, the Lord’s Supper was observed, and it was clear that George appreciated the opportunity of receiving the bread and wine, those symbols of Christ’s broken body and poured-out blood. The minister saw him walk down the aisle with his friend John Dean. Afterwards he wished that he had gone to speak to George, for it was his last opportunity to do so. That week George was found dead in bed. He had gone to the home he so much longed for.

John Dean remarked afterwards: “I didn’t suppose that he would leave us so suddenly, though we have thought lately that he would not stay with us much longer; his ordinary conversation was so much about heaven and heavenly things”.

He gave an example of George’s conversation: “When looking at a field of wheat we had both looked at the week before, he said – thinking about a remark he heard from the pulpit on the previous Sabbath – ‘If we did get right for heaven, as fast as this bit of wheat did for the reapers since a week ago, we should very soon be ready for the inheritance of the saints in light’”.

Then George had gone on to exclaim: “O what a wonderful world heaven must be. How I long to get there. How I long to see my blessed Saviour and get like Him. O how I long to bow down on my knees to worship Him. How I long to sing His praises. What grand harmony there. What a power of voices to sing His honour and glory – and they will sing for ever. If I had never left the country[side] to live here, I should never have known anything about

these grand and glorious things. What a mercy! The Lord be praised.” Looking back, John could see evidence, in these words about heaven, that God was preparing George for going there.

John's wife added her own thoughtful comments: “His conversion is a grand proof of the power of the Lord Jesus over the stupid thinking and the stubborn heart of man. And it is a grand display of the exceeding riches of His grace in the salvation of another of the chief of sinners.” Then she thought of the words of Luke 15:10: “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”, and she added, “A joyous day for the angels when he heard the first sermon at the chapel!”

What can we learn from the old ploughman? Probably many things, but let us confine ourselves to three.

(1.) Obviously a man who had spent more than 70 years ignoring God did not deserve to be saved. But no more does any sinner, no matter how religious he has been. Salvation is all of grace; it is God's kindness to those who deserve nothing. So we read: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

(2.) It is impossible for a man who knows nothing about the Bible, and the way of salvation that it reveals, to make his way to God. He needs divine power to instruct him, and to make him willing and able to come to Christ. But there is no limit to the power of the Holy Spirit; so George Medway, ignorant though he was, believed in Jesus after just one sermon.

(3.) Although George was so old before he heard the gospel, he was sorry he had lived so long in sin. How eager those who hear the gospel should be to receive it, and to do so without delay!

For Junior Readers

“What Is Happening Today?”

The church had a new minister. But it seems that the people were in too much of a hurry when they invited him to come. To invite a new minister to a church is a very important matter, because a minister's work is to tell the people what God wants them to know.

After a short time, the people of the church felt disappointed in their minister. He did not seem to be converted. And if he was not converted – if he did not have a new heart; if he was not trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation from sin – then he had no right to be a minister.

So what did they do? They decided to have a special day of prayer. They were going to ask God to convert their minister.

The day came and the people gathered to pray together. Many of them had to pass the minister's house. He wondered where they were all going. So he called one of the men as he was passing and asked him: "What is all this? What is happening today?"

The man told the minister the truth. He said, "The people are meeting to pray for your conversion".

The minister was shocked. He said to himself: "Then it is time I prayed for myself!" How right he was!

No one saw him again that day. He spent his time alone praying for the same blessing that the people in his congregation were asking God to give him. And God heard his prayer and the prayers of his people too. He was truly converted.

For nearly 50 years he went on preaching the gospel in his church. I hope the people went on praying for him – asking God to bless his preaching among them.

But do *you* pray for yourself? Do you ask God to give you a new heart, to make you want to please God, to forgive you all your sins and to save your soul from going down to hell? Do you ask God to bless your minister's preaching to you and also what you read in the Bible? Is it not time that you said: "Then it is time I prayed for myself!"

What the Bible Teaches About Sin

9. More about Our Own Righteousness and Strength

Charles Hodge

Another article shortened from the book, *The Way of Life*. Last month's article showed that we cannot by our own power turn from sin. So God cannot accept us as righteous apart from Christ's saving work. This article continues the subject.

To become conscious of our own weakness is a necessary part, or result, of true conviction. We must not only give up our own righteousness, but also our own strength. All that is necessary here, as on other points, is that we should feel what is true.

The Scriptures teach that this change of heart is the work of the Holy Spirit; that we are born again, not of the will of man, but of God; that it is the exceeding greatness of God's power that operates in those that believe, to make them alive who were dead in trespasses and sins, creating them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. If so, then this is one of the great truths of Scripture of which we must be convinced.

When someone is brought to feel that he is a sinner, that his heart is far

from being right in the sight of God, he naturally turns to his own strength to produce a change and bring himself up to the standard of the law. So his efforts are directed to subdue the power of sin and to arouse religious feelings in his heart. He tries to mortify pride and wean himself from the world. He gives up his sinful or worldly friends and forces himself to carry out the most unwelcome duties. At the same time he tries to force himself into a right state of mind, to make himself believe, repent and love; that is, he tries to make himself religious. He does everything in his own strength. Some people pursue this course until the end of their life. Others continue in this way for years and then find it to be all in vain.

But those who are taught of God find it to be a hopeless task. Such efforts cannot subdue the subtle evil of the heart. If we force ourselves to forego the pleasures of sin, we cannot destroy the desire of forbidden joys. If we stop pursuing worldly things, we still retain the love of the world. If we force ourselves to perform religious duties, we cannot make those duties a delight. If we force ourselves to think of God, we cannot force ourselves to love Him, to desire communion with Him, to take pleasure in serving Him. No one can tell the misery arising from these painful, vain attempts to subdue sin and work up the Christian graces.

If sinners could substitute anything for God's grace – making many prayers, or suffering – they would gladly do so. But to change the heart, to delight in God, to be really spiritual and holy, is a work the sinner finds above his strength and yet absolutely necessary. Even after repeated failures, he thinks that this is what he must do or be lost. So he struggles on, collects all his strength, and at last discovers that his strength is perfect weakness. He finds that if he is ever to be made holy, it must be the work of God. So he cries in the depth of his distress, Lord save me, or I perish.

He gives up working in his own strength, and sees what he wonders he never saw before, that Christian qualities are really graces, that is, gifts. He sees that they are not excellencies to be wrought out by ourselves; but favours given for Christ's sake. He sees that it is the Holy Spirit, purchased by Christ, that is to change the heart and convince of sin, righteousness and judgement. He sees that faith, repentance, joy, peace, humility and meekness are the fruits of the Spirit, not the products of our own evil hearts. He sees that it is the greatest of all delusions to suppose that we must be holy before we come to God through Christ.

While we are under the law, we bring forth fruit unto death. It is not until we are free from the law and reconciled to God by the death of His Son, that we bring forth fruit unto righteousness. This great truth, though written on every page of the Bible, everyone has to learn for himself. He cannot

understand it by reading it in the Scriptures, or by others telling him. He must try his own strength until he finds it to be nothing, before he submits to be saved by the grace of God. Then, bowing at Jesus' feet, in utter despair of any other helper, he says, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean".

When someone is convinced of sin, the Holy Spirit makes him understand and believe what God has revealed on this subject. The Spirit makes him feel that what He declares to be true of all is true of him in particular. The sinner also realises that *he* deserves what God declares that everyone deserves. He realises he has no merit to recommend him to God and no strength to change his heart. The Spirit states this knowledge in the law, the perfect rule of duty, and thus shows how far short we come of God's glory and how justly we are judged to be guilty. The law convinces us that we are entirely unable to obey its righteous demands. Thus it is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, driving us from every refuge of our own righteousness and strength.

UK Youth Conference Report 2012

Rev D Macdonald

This year's Young People's Conference was held at Carronvale House, Larbert, in East Stirlingshire from April 3 to April 5. This was a suitable venue for a conference; it had good facilities and was central for a historical tour. The event was attended by 36 young people, including some of our young friends from Canada. Some extra young people and adults joined us for the evening papers. We are grateful to those who delivered papers, to those who led the historical tour, and also the house mothers for all their help.

Rev Wilfred Weale gave the first paper. His subject was the Doctrine of Providence, and how we should interpret it. He developed four main themes: God's works of providence are progressive; extensive; holy, wise and powerful; and mysterious.

The second paper was delivered by Mrs Morag Munro. She asked the question: Does Biblical Christianity Exist in our Schools? She discussed three areas: the history of education, the laws that apply to it, and the dilemmas and opportunities for those who work in schools. She touched on the various Act of Parliaments from 1560 to 1918, and those up to the present involving human rights and equality. She also spoke on the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland, which allows religious observance and acts of worship.

Following supper and worship Rev David Campbell and Mrs Munro gave a slide show of their tour to Israel.

On the Wednesday morning, after breakfast and worship, Rev John Goldby

gave a paper on Conversion: Turning to God and what it is. He dealt with effectual calling, contrasting it with the Arminian view; he explained the distinction between conversion and regeneration. In the second part of his paper he spoke about how conversion begins with the Word of God, and the gospel in particular, and how a converted man comes to love the Word of God; he then spoke about the danger of false conversion. He gave examples from the Bible.

In the afternoon there was a historical tour led by Mr David Norris, assisted by Rev David Campbell; Rev Douglas Somerset joined the Conference for the tour. The tour took the group to the Old Parish Church in Larbert; one subject of interest there was the grave of Rev Robert Bruce and his original gravestone. Another was the room where Robert Murray M'Cheyne used to study when he was assistant minister in Larbert. The tour also took them to Colzium, near Kilsyth, where the Battle of Kilsyth was fought in 1645; it was a defeat for the Covenanter forces in the time of Charles I. The tour then went on to the memorial stone, at Inchbelly Bridge, which commemorates John Wharry and James Smith, two Covenanters who were executed there. There was also a visit to the Kilsyth Church, which was the scene of revivals under the ministries of James Robe and William Burns. Here also is the gravestone of Francis Garden, who was killed as he was fleeing from the Battle of Kilsyth.

The Wednesday evening paper was given by Rev George Hutton, on the Apostle John, his life and ministry. There were two parts to his paper: first, Mr Hutton drew attention to John's early life, his social circumstances, his dove-like qualities; he was the youngest of the disciples. The second part of the paper dealt with John's written ministry. He made specific references to Christ's appearances after His resurrection, and contrasted John's writings with the other Gospels. Known as the Apostle of love, he takes us within the veil, into heaven.

The final paper, on Thursday morning, was given by Rev David Campbell, on Robert Bruce: preacher to the conscience. He was a noted Scottish minister who died in 1631. His paper included: a look at the life of Robert Bruce, Robert Bruce and his conscience, Robert Bruce and the King's conscience and, finally, Robert Bruce preaching to the conscience. There was a choice quotation from Bruce at the end of the paper: "The Lord never needs to seek a member of court outside of your own soul in order to conduct a lawful process against you, for you have all these within yourself".

This was an enjoyable conference; we thank the young people for coming and for their contributions to the discussions. We hope and pray that these occasions may be blessed to them.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2011-12

UK Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick:* Robert Ross. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie. *Stornoway:* Iain Boyd. *Kings Lynn:* Matthew Wiltshire. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper.
Awards with Merit: *Barnoldswick:* David J Martin. *Edinburgh:* Daniel Macdonald. *London:* Amy van Kralingen. *Trowbridge:* Johanna Broome.
Awards: *Glasgow:* Callum MacPherson.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Gairloch:* Catherine Wyatt, Donald Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Emma Norris. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *Stornoway:* Cirsty Gillies. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot.
Awards with Merit: *Chippenham:* Jessica Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Graham Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald. *London:* Andrew Munns. *Sidcup:* Jemima Turnbull. *Snizort:* Rebekah Macleod. *Staffin:* Neil Matheson.
Awards: *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Glasgow:* Kenneth MacPherson. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *Staffin:* Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Aimee Macleod. *Vatten:* Jayne-Anne Fleming.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Glasgow:* Jonathan Norris, Rachel Smith. *London:* Claudia Campbell. *North Tolsta:* Mairi Campbell. *Sidcup:* Joseph Turnbull. *Snizort:* Sarah Macleod. *Stornoway:* Joanna Maclean.
Tonbridge: Katie and James Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Abigail Broome.
Awards with Merit: *Aberdeen:* Rachel Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Chippenham:* Rosie Salkeld. *Glasgow:* Katie Macpherson. *Kings Lynn:* Susie Wiltshire. *Stornoway:* Ryan Macsween. *Trowbridge:* Daniel Broome.
Awards: *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Kyle:* Sarah Whear. *London:* Sam Munns. *Ness:* Kathryn Ferguson, *North Tolsta:* Christie and Catriona Nicolson. *Sidcup:* Henry Turnbull. *South Harris:* Cameron A Macleod.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Hannah Mackenzie, Laura Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Bradley Morrison. *Gairloch:* Roddie Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Iain Macpherson, Jessica Norris. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot.
Awards with Merit: *Aberdeen:* Samuel McIntosh. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *North Tolsta:* Anna Campbell. *South Harris:* Jessica Ann Macleod. *Stornoway:* Lucienne Doig, Cara Macleod.
Awards: *Dingwall:* Matthew Ross. *London:* James Campbell, Henry Munns. *Sidcup:* Annabelle and Sebastian Turnbull. *Snizort:* Jonathan Macleod. *Stornoway:* Jamie Doig, Matthew Macleod.

Lower Primary Section

Aberdeen: Jane Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen. *Beauly:* Deborah MacLean.
Brighton: Katharine Hills. *Chippenham:* Timothy Salkeld. *Dingwall:* Esther and Lydia Ross.
Edinburgh: Fraser Morrison. *Glasgow:* Grant MacLennan, Hugh Macpherson, David and Louise Norris, Cameron Ross, Rebecca Smith. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh. *Inverness:* Lois and Victoria Maton. *Kings Lynn:* Thomas Wiltshire. *Kyle:* Mark Whear. *London:* Rachel and John Campbell, David, John and Sarah Munns. *Ness:* Eilidh Ferguson. *North Harris:* Hannah Jardine, Cara and Connor Macdonald, Neil Morrison. *North Tolsta:* Esther and Ross Campbell, Ruth Morrison, Beth Nicolson. *Sidcup:* Julius and Max Turnbull. *Snizort:* Andrew Macleod.
South Harris: Matthew Macleod. *Stornoway:* Sarah Inglis, Paul Mackenzie, Fraser Macleod, Kate and Mollie MacSween. *Tain:* Abigail and Benjamin Reynolds. *Vatten:* Hannah Fleming.



Members of this year's Youth Conference

Looking Around Us

Life on Mars?

Nasa, America's space agency, has successfully landed its Mars rover on the planet. Known as MSL-Curiosity, it weighs almost a ton and is the size of a small car.

No one expects MSL-Curiosity to find life on Mars. The instruments it is carrying will be used to investigate whether Mars once had the conditions in which microbes could survive. In particular, Nasa scientists are looking for three things: evidence of water being present in the past, for a source of energy which life forms could have used, and a source of suitable materials with which these life forms could have built their structures.

But, supposing all these were found, the scientists would be a very long way from proving that life ever existed on Mars. They are thinking in terms of millions, perhaps billions, of years, and it is clear from the Bible that the actual time since creation is very much less. Besides, there is nothing in God's Word to suggest that life has ever existed anywhere, except on earth.

All this means that it is a huge waste of money to spend billions of dollars (MSL-Curiosity has cost \$2.5 billion) to investigate if conditions on Mars, or anywhere outside the earth, were ever suitable for life. It is an attempt to bolster the theory of evolution, and evolution is false; God created all things in six days. If the Bible tells us where life has come from, we can rely on what it says. God's revelation is perfectly reliable.

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