

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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Contents

What Is Sin?	223
The Bible's Teaching on Justification: 3. What Does the Old Testament Say?	225
Old Catharine	227
For Junior Readers: The Flower and the Snake	229
The Apostle John's Life and Ministry: 2. Made Willing to Follow Jesus	230
For Younger Readers: God Was Merciful	232
"I Am a Lost Man"	233
Through the Alphabet with the Bible: Give	236
Index for 2012	237
Looking Around Us	239

Cover Picture: *Gemsbok (a species of antelope) in the Kalahari Desert, South Africa. See page 227.*

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What Is Sin?

Where did sin begin? It began in heaven, when the one we now know as Satan rebelled against God. And he carried a large number of other angels with him into sin. Up to that point, they were all very good – like all the rest of God's creation. They had total respect for God and for His authority. When they became unholy, they were put out of heaven, because nothing unholy can stay there.

When God's work of creation had ended, there were two perfectly-holy human beings on earth, Adam and Eve. They had total respect for God and for His authority; they admired His goodness; they sought His glory in everything they did; even their thoughts were perfectly pure and holy. They were completely free from sin.

But ever since his fall into sin, Satan has had a total hatred for God. He just cannot abide the thought that any of God's creatures might accept His authority and glorify Him in their lives. That is why, ever since he rebelled, he has always been going about trying to tempt people to commit sin.

After they were created, God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of one particular tree – just one: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was a special test of their obedience to God. They could eat from all the other trees.

When Satan came into the Garden of Eden, he wanted to separate Adam and Eve from God and he focused on that special command. He began his temptation by asking Eve: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1). He must have known that God had said this, but he wanted to raise doubts in Eve's mind. Perhaps if he had claimed right away that God was wrong to forbid them to eat of this tree, she would have realised that he was tempting her to rebel against God. She would have known at once that she must not listen to him for one moment.

But he was working cleverly – it was an evil cleverness; that is why the Bible uses the word *subtle* for Satan. He was working gradually, step by step; and he went on to tempt Eve to believe that God was not being good to her; it was unkind, he claimed, for God to deny her this wonderful fruit.

Eve believed him and she took the fruit and ate it. That was sin; she disobeyed God; she rebelled against Him. Sin is rebellion against God.

Eve then gave the fruit to her husband Adam; he too ate the fruit. So he also sinned. Now they were both sinners; they were both fallen creatures. They did not love God; indeed they were no longer able to love God.

Adam and Eve sinned by doing what God told them not to do; they ate the forbidden fruit. And you sin when you do what God tells you not to do. For instance, God commands you not to tell lies. So, if you say what is not true, you are sinning.

You also sin when you fail to do what God commands you to do. He tells you to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”. If you forget God’s authority and want to do whatever you like on the Sabbath, you are sinning. And you sin even if you waste time on a Sabbath – you should be doing something that is glorifying to God. For as much of the time as possible, you should do what will benefit your soul, like attending church, praying, or reading the Bible or some other good book.

Many of you will have learned the answer to the *Shorter Catechism* question: “What is sin?” It is: “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God”. Sin is a transgression of the law of God, it tells us. In other words, sin is a crossing of the boundaries that God has set for us in His law . For instance, God’s law has set boundaries around what we say. But if we tell lies, we have crossed one of the boundaries that God has set for us. So to tell lies is sin.

But the *Shorter Catechism* answer also speaks of a *want* (or lack) of conformity to God’s law; that is when we come short of the full demands of God’s law. Consider the demand of the Fourth Commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy – perfectly holy. If we do not keep the Sabbath perfectly, we are sinning.

You may say that this is an unreasonable standard. But, remember, the God whom we ought to serve is perfectly holy. He created us; so it is totally reasonable for Him to expect us to be perfectly holy. And because He is totally just, we must expect that He will punish us for our many, many sins.

There is only one way to escape that punishment. It is to look to Christ Jesus, the one Saviour of sinners. He calls to us: “Look unto Me” (Isaiah 45:22). And Jesus promises that, if we do so – if we trust in Him – we will be saved, because He took the punishment due to sinners and suffered instead.

Everyone who truly believes in Him will also turn away from sin. That is repentance. It will be a lifelong process that will only be completed at death. Then there will be no more sin. Everyone who believes in Jesus will be brought to heaven and treated as if they had never sinned. How wonderful!

The Bible's Teaching on Justification

3. What Does the Old Testament Say?

Charles Hodge

This series comes from *The Way of Life* and has been edited. For God to justify someone is to pronounce him or her righteous. Last month's article brought evidence from the Bible that "our own good works cannot save us".

Paul has a second argument to show that justification is not by works. He uses the testimony of the Old Testament.

First, there are all those passages which state that everyone has sinned; they are so many declarations that no one can be justified by works. In Romans 3, he quotes such passages as these: "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are all together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one."

By teaching that all are sinners, the Old Testament shows that God can never accept them on the ground of their own righteousness. To say that someone is a sinner is to say that the law condemns him. So of course it cannot justify him. As the Old Testament is full of declarations about the sinfulness of men, so it is full of proof that justification is not by works.

Second, Paul quotes direct testimony in support of his teaching. In the Psalms it is said to God, "Enter not into judgement with Thy servant; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (143:2). He often quotes this passage. To the same class belong all those passages which speak of the worthlessness of human righteousness in God's sight.

Third, Paul refers to those passages which say that God accepts people as a matter of grace – they do not deserve it; they have no claim to it founded on their own merit. He refers to the words of David: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:7). The fact that someone is forgiven implies that he is guilty; and the fact that he is guilty tells us that his justification cannot rest on his own character or behaviour.

From beginning to end, the Scriptures are crowded with condemnations of the idea of justification by works. Every time someone sincerely confesses sin or appeals to God's mercy, he is declaring that his hope is not founded on anything in himself.

Confessions and appeals are indeed often made by those who rely on their good works for acceptance with God. This only shows that such people differ from Paul in their view of what is necessary for justification. They suppose that the demands of the law are so low that they can do what the law

demands, although they are sinners and need to be forgiven. But Paul knows that the law requires perfect obedience.

Again, Paul shows that the Old Testament teaches that justification is not by works, when it points to a different method of being accepted by God. It points to the Messiah as the Redeemer from sin. Hence Paul says that the law and the prophets – that is, the whole Old Testament – testified to the method of justification “without works” (not founded on works).

The two possible methods of acceptance with God – the one by works, the other by a propitiation for sin – contradict each other. As the Old Testament teaches the second of these, it opposes the other. It states clearly, “The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). The law knows nothing of faith; its language is, “The man that doeth them [the commandments] shall live by them” (Galatians 3:12). The only ground of acceptance that the law knows is obedience. The Scriptures say we are accepted through faith – in other words, they say that we are not accepted on the ground of obedience.

Again, the Old Testament examples we have of people being justified show that it was not by works. Paul appeals particularly to the case of Abraham, and asks, Was he justified by works? He answers, No, for if he was justified by works, he could have gloried in himself. But he had no ground of glorying before God; so he was not justified by works. And the Scriptures clearly state: “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Galatians 3:6). So his acceptance was by faith, not by works.

In all these various ways, Paul uses the authority of the Old Testament to support the teaching that justification is not by works. We also believe that the Old Testament is the Word of God, and its truths come to us explained and enforced by Christ and His apostles. We have the great advantage that they interpret these earlier writings without the slightest error, which makes the real intentions of the writers of the Old Testament perfectly clear. That no one shall be justified before God by the deeds of the law, is presented so clearly and so often in the New Testament that no one can doubt that this is indeed the teaching of the Word of God.

The only question which can properly be raised is, What kind of works do the Scriptures exclude as the foundation for acceptance with God? Does Paul mean works in the widest sense, or does he mean only ceremonial observance, or works done without any real love to God?

Those who carefully follow what he is saying will find that there is no room for doubt on this matter. He starts with the fact that the law demands perfect obedience. As no one can obey perfectly, he concludes that no one can be justified by the law. He nowhere says that we are justified by our sincere

obedience – even though it is imperfect – though we cannot be justified by outward ceremonies, or by works which have only the *form* of goodness. He always teaches that the law condemns us, since we are sinners and it condemns all sin. So justification by the law is impossible.

He applies this argument to Jews and Gentiles without distinction – to the whole world, whether they knew any thing about the Bible or not. The law he speaks about is the moral law – which says, Thou shalt not covet – however it has been revealed, whether in the writings of Moses or in the human heart. This is the law which, he constantly states, cannot give life or teach the way of acceptance with God. He always contrasts works and faith, never one class of works with another, whether good works or those done apart from faith. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Titus 3:5).

We are saved by faith, not by works. Indeed people are said to be justified without works, to be ungodly in themselves even when justified. It is not until they are justified that they perform any really good works. It is only when united to Christ that we bring forth fruit unto God. So we are said to be God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). All the inward excellence of the Christian and the fruits of the Spirit are the results of being accepted by God, not the causes of reconciliation. So it is the plain doctrine of the Bible that our justification is not founded on our obedience to God’s law. Nothing we have done can for a moment stand the test of a rule of righteousness which pronounces a curse on all those who do not continue “in all things written in the book of the law to do them”.

Old Catharine

Most people knew her as Old Catharine. She did not know exactly how old she was, but people believed she was at least 110 when she died. She lived in Swellendam in the south west of South Africa. She lived the first part of her life as a heathen, but became a servant in the home of a godly elder. There she attended family worship and learned something of the truths of God’s Word.

She used to listen to the preaching of a man who was described as an excellent missionary; his name was Pacalt. He preached simply, staying faithful to the truths of the Bible. Catharine listened seriously and realised that she was a sinner before God; so she began to seek the Saviour. Indeed she became a true follower of Christ and was baptized, by which time she must already have passed the age of 100.

She would become quite excited when she heard anyone speak about Christ's sufferings and death. "For me, for my sins, He had to suffer all that," she would say, often with tears flowing down her cheeks. Catharine was usually the first to reach the church, and other people would find her sitting on the steps at the front of the church waiting for the doors to open. Even when she was not well, she would still come. When someone would make a comment about her coming to church in these circumstances, she would reply, "My Lord brought me here; He gave me strength".

Every morning, Catharine spent time in prayer. And through the night, when she was not able to sleep, others would hear her praying earnestly to God. One day, a friend asked Catharine to pray for her. The next night people heard her asking God to bless her friend.

Someone once met Catharine early one morning feeding her chickens and asked her, quite unnecessarily, if she had first gone to pray. "Ah," she answered, "how could I forget that? It is my bread and my water." Prayer was something that Catharine could not do without.

Catharine was always speaking about the love of Christ and, therefore, how wholeheartedly she should live for Him. One day a woman was very upset because her child had died. Catharine went to visit her and tried to help her in her sorrow. Then she said, "Let go; let go. Only fall down at His feet; ask Him to take your heart, and He will make all right." To fall down at Christ's feet seems to have been her way of saying: to submit to Him and to worship Him.

When people complained to her about the state of their souls, she would say, "Do not complain to me, but go to the Lord Jesus. Fall down at His feet and ask Him for pardon and help."

When a godly Indian was talking to her, she was very excited when he spoke about the great love of Christ. Then he asked, "Catharine, will Christ come again?"

"Yes," she answered, "at the day of judgement."

"And where do you think your place will be on that day?"

Catharine smiled and replied, "O, at His right hand, for He surely died for my sins, and His blood is upon my soul".

For the last year of her life she was almost totally blind, and someone had to lead her to church. Probably she was also deaf, for she was allowed to sit on the pulpit steps, where it would be much easier to hear what the preacher was saying.

On the last Sabbath of her life, she did not feel able to attend public worship. So a friend called on her afterwards, and Catharine told her: "I was too weak to go to church today, but the Lord was here with me. And the

room seemed too small when I was allowed to fall down at His feet and speak to Him freely and mention all His mercies to a great sinner.”

The next morning, Catharine was very ill and sent someone to tell the minister. He went at once to where she lived and said to her: “Well, Catharine, it seems you are going to leave us”.

“Yes,” she answered, “it is all over with Old Catharine.”

“Where do you think you are going?”

“To heaven, for Jesus surely died for my sins.”

“To depart and be with Christ is surely far better.”

“Yes, to be with Christ is the best. And His Spirit must thoroughly cleanse me and make me able to serve Him there in a perfect way.” Then Catharine added with great emphasis: “Without shedding of blood, no one shall enter into the kingdom”.

These were her last words. The effort of speaking so forcefully was too much for her and she fell backwards onto the bed. There she lay unconscious until the next day, when her soul went to heaven. Just as Catharine hoped, all her sin was washed away and she will serve God there perfectly for ever.

For Junior Readers

The Flower and the Snake

A woman walked into a garden to gather some flowers. The garden was full of lovely blooms. There was one large bush whose branches were bending under the weight of the most beautiful roses. They both stopped to admire these amazing flowers. There was one flower which seemed even bigger and more beautiful than the rest. The woman reached forward into the thick bush to pluck it.

As she did so, a black snake, which was hiding in the bush, wrapped itself around her arm. You can imagine her fright. She ran from the garden screaming. For the rest of that day she trembled with fright. No one could calm her down. She would never look at a snake again, not even a dead one. No one could ever persuade her to go near these bushes again, not even to pick a beautiful rose.

Is this not how we should think of sin? We should see it as a serpent that would coil itself around us and strangle us, that would poison us with its venom. We should hate it. We should dread it above everything else. We should flee from it.

We should be afraid of places where people sin, and we should not go there. We should not watch things that make light of sin.

This woman would never afterwards have played with a snake. No more should *we* trifle with sin. Rather, we should flee from it in every shape and form.

The Bible gives us many examples of sins we should flee from – sins we should avoid at all costs:

- “Flee fornication” and all other sins against the Seventh Commandment, which are so common today.
- “Flee from idolatry”, from putting anything else before God in your life – from loving anyone more than God.
- “Flee also youthful lusts”, all the sins which young people are specially likely to do.

Will you not pray that God would give you a heart to hate all sin and to love His holy law? Ask that you would think in the same way as the man who wrote Psalm 119:

“I hate the thoughts of vanity, but love Thy law do I.
My shield and hiding place Thou art; I on Thy word rely.
All ye that evil-doers are, from me depart away;
For the commandments of my God I purpose to obey.”

J van Kralingen

The Apostle John's Life and Ministry

2. Made Willing to Follow Jesus

Rev G G Hutton

The first part of this Youth Conference paper spoke about John's background.

The name John corresponds to the Old Testament Jonah, which, according to several writers, means *dove*. From what we can see in the New Testament, this would seem to be a very appropriate name for someone of John's character. We have no reason to think that his dove-like qualities contradict what is suggested in the surname Jesus gave him – *Boanerges*, son of thunder – and they are quite obvious throughout the record of his life and ministry.

Some biblical scholars are of the opinion that John's personality changed a lot during his life. They believe, from a close study of his writings, that he matured and mellowed with time and experience. John outlived the other apostles, surviving to a ripe old age, and he wrote in the latter period of his life rather than in the years of relative inexperience.

So it is reckoned that John Boanerges, the son of thunder, became John the tender, or John the gentle. The work of sanctification is an answer to the

Saviour's high priestly prayer (in John 17). This work restrained John's youthful thunder and brought about much more of the sunshine of divine grace and Christ-like tenderness. When, for example, we find him addressing the people of God as "My little children" or "Little children" no fewer than nine times in his First Epistle, it speaks volumes as to the extent of the Saviour's influence upon John. It was he who recorded, in his Gospel, Jesus' tender and compassionate words to His disciples, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you" (John 13:33).

It is generally believed that John was the youngest of Jesus' disciples and this in itself may have given John a special place in His affections – without arousing jealousy among the other disciples. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23, 19:26, 21:7). And this degree of affection on the part of Jesus undoubtedly gave John privileged access to His thoughts.

The fact that it is stated that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved does not in any way suggest that He did not love the other disciples. Clearly this cannot be the case. We do in fact read of others who were the objects of His sinless affection: for example, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:5). We also read of the young man who came to Jesus: "Then Jesus beholding him loved Him" (Mark 10:21). Jesus, through His human soul, could judge character and recognise qualities and virtues in people in a way that others could not. So, in His holy humanity, some people, for different reasons, were more attractive to Him than others.

The meek and lowly Saviour could obviously see some attractive traits in John which, to some degree, set him apart from the rest of the disciples, thus admitting him to a privileged relationship. In fact Jesus was so close to John, and had such confidence in him, that on the cross He committed His mother into his care, making him her guardian. We read, "From that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19:26,27). And all the other Gospel authors – Matthew, Mark and Luke – tell us that John and his brother James, along with Peter, were admitted into what we might call an inner circle among Jesus' disciples. Thus we can expect glimpses of the Saviour from the pen of this particular apostle which we cannot find anywhere else.

It appears from John's description of events in the first chapter of his Gospel that he was a disciple of John the Baptist before following Jesus. Christ's forerunner said, "Behold the Lamb of God", and the words made such a profound impression on John and another disciple that they began at once to follow Jesus. Thus John was one of the very first followers of the Saviour, one of the first to believe in Him. This fact itself may well have been a factor in Jesus' fondness for John.

But John did not act on a whim; he knew exactly how and why he had

become a follower of Jesus at such an early stage in His ministry. He wrote about Jesus: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:10-12). When John followed the Saviour, it was the beginning of that mighty work of the Spirit of God of which the Prophets had spoken over many centuries. It was a work that would move the hearts of men to turn to God as He uniquely revealed Himself to them in the flesh, through the eternal Son, who said, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44).

John understood the need for a divine work in the soul, if he or anyone else was to become a follower of Christ. He had experienced the compelling power of God, making him willing (see Psalm 110:3, for example). After all, it is John who records these words of Jesus: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16), and it is from John's pen we receive the believer's confession: "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). It is John alone, among the writers of the four Gospels who records for us the conversation which took place between Jesus and the Pharisee called Nicodemus. In doing so he conveys to us the basic doctrine of the new birth: "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

For Younger Readers

God Was Merciful

When I was young, it was not so easy to send a message to someone else – a message which you wanted them to get at once. Now it is much easier; nearly everyone has a phone in their house and a mobile phone, and most people can send e-mails.

There was a time when lots of people did not have phones. Instead they might send a message by telegram. They would go to a post office and write out their message. Then the message was sent to a telegraph office or to another post office. Then someone would take the message to the person to whom it was being sent.

There was a young man working in a telegraph office in a town in England. He knew he was a sinner. The main thing he wanted to know was: how could he be saved from his sins?

One day, at his work, he was saying inside himself: “God be merciful to me a sinner”. And God was merciful.

He heard a click on the telegraph machine. A telegram was coming. The machine typed it out letter by letter. First came the name and address of the person the telegram was for.

Then came the words from the Bible about Jesus: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”. Then came more words from the Bible about Jesus: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”.

To the man, the message seemed like a telegram from heaven. God knew that these words were exactly what he needed to hear. He blessed them to the man. The man believed and was saved.

The message came from another man, who was sending it to his sister. She too was seeking salvation from sin. And she too found salvation in the message from her brother.

“I Am a Lost Man”

James Wilson was born in 1760 and became an officer in the British Army. He fought in various battles in India and was captured by his enemies. He tried to escape but does not seem to have been successful. By the time he was released, after 22 months of imprisonment, he was far from well. He had become rich somehow and used part of his money to buy an estate in the south of England. He decided to settle there, hoping that he would become well again.

But Wilson had no real religion. He had not been brought up to trust in God and he had been further turned against religion by all the idolatry he saw in India. He had many discussions about religion with a missionary whom he met on the ship that was carrying them both back to Britain. The missionary was shocked at the way he rejected the Bible. Surely, the missionary thought, after all the dangers and sufferings that Wilson had experienced, he would thank God for His care over him – especially now that he had become wealthy and was making his way home in safety.

But Wilson refused to recognise that God was ruling over everything in His providence. He compared himself with other people whom he thought lived worse lives than himself. He considered himself a very generous

individual; indeed he imagined that no one, not even God, could say anything against him.

He disliked the teachings of the Bible. He did not wish to consider a book which was meant to teach him various things he did not want to believe: that he had a bad heart, that all his life he was a rebel against his Creator, that thus God was angry with him, that he could only find forgiveness and happiness through the goodness of the God whom he had offended, and that he did not deserve that goodness. It was all so very humbling.

Back in England, Wilson settled down on his estate. His niece looked after his house for him; she was a converted woman, but he looked on her religion as a weakness. Yet her way of life did have some effect on his thinking.

An old ship's captain lived nearby and often spoke to Wilson about religion. This man knew his Bible well, but he was not able to answer his neighbour's objections to it. He did what was perhaps more important: he warned Wilson about the dangers that unbelievers face and he pleaded with him to give up his disbelief in the Bible. But Wilson just smiled – and went on with his arguments. But occasionally something would strike his conscience and he would feel guilty. Sometimes it would cross his mind that, if Christianity was from God, then his way of life was completely wrong and so were his thoughts about himself and his hopes for happiness in the future.

One day Wilson was having a meal in the captain's home. Also present was his niece's minister, a young man whose name was Griffin. They started to discuss the question: Is the Bible genuine? The captain admitted that Wilson had often overcome him in argument on the subject but he hoped that Griffin would be able to answer Wilson's objections to the authority of the Bible. Yet the minister did not think that it was a suitable time for such a discussion – though he was always ready, he told them, to defend the truth as well as he could.

Wilson told the others that he would be glad to have a conversation about the Bible. He had never met a minister, he claimed, whom he could not defeat in argument “in a quarter of an hour” – and he had discussed the subject with several ministers.

It was a fine July evening and the three men went outside into the garden and talked. Wilson found the discussion much more difficult than he had expected. They talked and talked for hours, and Griffin met all Wilson's objections to Christianity in a calm, earnest spirit. And when darkness brought the conversation to an end, Griffin recommended some books for him to read. Though he was not entirely convinced, Wilson's confidence was broken and he was prepared to consider the matter seriously. He had begun to feel the real importance of the matter they had spoken about.

He spent the next days reading the Bible carefully. When Sabbath came, he offered to drive his niece to church, 10 miles away; but his real reason was to hear her minister preach though, it seems, he did not want to admit it. Griffin had clearly impressed him by the way he defended Christianity. And he was further impressed by the simplicity of the worship in the church and by the seriousness of the congregation.

Griffin was planning to preach from Romans 8 on predestination, but when he noticed Wilson among his hearers, he felt rather uncomfortable. He did not feel his sermon would be very suitable for someone who had argued so strongly against the truth of Christianity, someone he never thought would have been present. He would have been glad if he could have spoken on some other subject. But God was in the matter, and Wilson always looked back on that sermon as having an important influence on his conversion.

Griffin presented his theme in a way which awakened Wilson to a sense of his danger as a sinner. Wilson listened very carefully. His whole soul was disturbed; he experienced a storm in his heart which he could not subdue; and he rose in rebellion against the idea of the sovereignty of God. Yet the events of his whole life came before his mind as evidences he could not argue against: they showed that God was indeed ruling over everything. He tried to keep back the tears which fell from his eyes, and he was afraid to wipe them away in case he would draw attention to himself. But the minister noticed, and feelings of kindness, joy and sympathy arose in his heart.

Wilson's sense of danger brought him to seek earnestly for mercy and the forgiveness of his sins, and he very much wanted God to teach him. On their way home, he told his niece: “If what I have heard today is true, I am a lost man”. He knew that he ought to look into the matter carefully; his conscience pointed in the same direction. He remembered with pain the sins of his past; he was afraid as he looked into the future. But he did not want his friends to mock him, and this held him back to some extent. So his mind was in turmoil. He became thoughtful and spent most of his time reading the Bible and other religious books. He went regularly to church. One question seemed to occupy his mind: “What must I do to be saved?”

Wilson did still meet his friends. They noticed that he was not the man they used to know. He used to make fun of others; now others made fun of him. Sometimes he tried to argue with them; at other times he tried to join in the merriment. But it did not really work. His friends tried to put out of his mind what, to them, were his strange new ideas. They failed and gradually they broke off their friendship. It was a great mercy that this happened; God was good to him.

Gradually Wilson became sure that the Bible was a revelation from God.

He said, "Nothing in the world, not even Satan with all his principalities and powers, could persuade me that the Bible is not the Word of the Most High. Neither could anything have weaned me from my errors so completely as that precious volume has done." Having believed that the Bible is the Word of God, he accepted its teachings about, for instance, salvation through Christ Jesus alone and the need for holiness. And it was soon clear that he had trusted in Christ for the salvation of his own soul.

A life of luxury on his estate could no longer satisfy the new convert – if it ever had really done so. What could he do, he now asked himself, for the honour of his Saviour and for the good of his fellow sinners?

The London Missionary Society had been formed not long before then. Now it was planning to send out a group of missionaries to Tahiti, an island in the southern Pacific Ocean. Wilson, his health now presumably recovered, took charge of the missionary party and they sailed in August 1796 from the River Thames on board the *Duff*, bound for the Pacific. Reflecting on the huge change in Wilson's life and thinking, someone pointed to the mysterious ways of providence, the influence of truth and the power of Christian principles. He was a very different man from the unbelieving army officer who kept arguing with the missionary on his voyage home from India just a few years before. God can do wonderful things.

Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word:

Give

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 (John 3:16).

Precept: My son, *give* Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways (Proverbs 23:26).

Promise: A new heart also will I *give* you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will *give* you an heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26).

Prayer: *Give* understanding unto me, so keep Thy law shall I;
Yea, even with my whole heart I shall observe it carefully.

(Psalm 119:34)

Encouragement: And I *give* unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:28).

The Young People's Magazine

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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)

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

Abraham – the Friend of God	68,	When the Chair Broke	115
	90,106,126,146,166	Fountain of Hope at Ingwenya	170
Ann’s Night of Prayer	51	God Was There	70
Apostle John’s Life and Ministry, The	206,230	God’s Providence	110,130,151,168,185
“Are You Happy?”	46	Huge Difference, A	203
“Ask for the Old Paths”	3	“I Am a Lost Man”	233
Australia and NZ Youth Conference	137,220	“I Love God Sincerely”	94
		Irrelevant?	63
Bible Is the Standard, The	123	“I’ve Found the Saviour Precious”	187
Bible’s Teaching on Justification, The	190,210,225	Job’s Love for God’s Words	163
“Can You Pray All the Time?”	195	John and Mary	66
Christ as Priest	155	Looking Around Us	20,33,59,79,94, 120,139,159,180,196,215,239
Counting the Cost	216	Lord’s Supper, The	83
“Do You Love Me?”	76	Man Whose Teacher Was Jesus, The	208
“Do You Read Such Books?”	28	New Life in a Graveyard	209
Donald Bethune	57	Old Catharine	227
Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ	116	Old Ploughman, The	108,128,148,172
Felix Trembled	183	Old Slave’s Prayer, The	8
		“One More Exact Translation”	14
For Junior Readers:		Poetry:	
Bitter Disappointment, A	132	Christian’s Golden Calf, The	80
Cask of Oil and the Bible, The	77	Evening Thoughts	140
<i>Costa Concordia</i> , The	54	Thoughts After an Illness	160
Flower and the Snake, The	229	“Power of God unto Salvation, The”	6,30,49,
Good News	25		
New Year Resolutions	12	Ready to Die?	143
One Bible for 200 People	214	Robert Morrison	9
“So Run that Ye May Obtain”	192	Sending for a Lifeboat	103
Torn Testament, The	113	“Speak, Lord”	23
Tower of Pisa, The	154	Through the Alphabet with the Bible	54,93,113,136,151,194,236
“What Is Happening Today?”	174		
Worst Journey in the World, The	92	Scripture and Catechism Exercises:	
For Younger Readers:		Exercises	36,97,197
Best Son, The	194	General Information	196
Bible-Seller, The	153	Names	19,39,119
God Answers Prayer	34	Prizes and Awards	179,219
God Kept Him Safe	96	Submission to God, and More	192
God Was Merciful	232	“Turn the Bible into Prayer”	43
In God’s Care	213	UK Youth Conference 2012	40,60,177
Lost Coin, The	136	What Is Sin?	223
New Boots, The	172	What the Bible Teaches About Sin	16,26,47,72,87,133,157,175
Samuel’s Little Lamb	13	Worshipper and a Witness, A	212
Things to Listen for	75	Yeddie’s First and Last Lord’s Supper	85
What the Boy Forgot	56		

Looking Around Us

Procrastination

As students were getting ready for a new session at university, an article appeared on the BBC website about procrastination – putting off till tomorrow what one should do today. It pictured “undergraduates across the UK . . . struggling to remember how it feels to compose an essay – or, more likely, how it feels *not* to write that thesis or dissertation”. And it described this as “the student’s curse”.

But it is not just *students* who waste time. Professor Piers Steel of Calgary University has done a lot of research on the matter and has found that 95% of us procrastinate at some point. And Professor Joseph Ferrari from Chicago has found that 20% of the world’s population are chronic procrastinators, always putting off the task they should be getting on with.

We are sinners and we need God’s help in everything we do. So we ought to ask Him to help us. Students, in particular, ought to ask God’s help to get on with their studying, including writing essays. How appropriate, whatever our task, to ask God to help us to do it and to do it at the right time!

There is one vital matter which is very readily put off. That is to seek God. It is procrastination at its most dangerous. But He says, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:1). Yet people put off seeking salvation, not just till tomorrow, but for many years. Let us seek the Lord earnestly *now*, before it is too late. The consequences of continued procrastination in this matter are unspeakably awful.

“Glasgow Loves Christmas”

This is the slogan for a campaign to boost shopping in the city in the run up to December 25. At the centre of the campaign is Glasgow’s first-ever Christmas parade. Sadly, you do not need to be surprised that it was to take place on a Sabbath, on November 18. “Santa and his elves”, we are told, “will lead the procession on a landtrain down Buchanan Street. Expect all kinds of Christmas magic as snowmen, fairies . . . help start the Christmas celebrations. The day is rounded off with a festive concert.”

This is as far from proper Sabbath observance as can be imagined. The Lord’s Day is given for our spiritual good. But this entertainment draws people in the opposite direction. Christmas, it is claimed, celebrates the birth of Jesus. But, more and more, people are realising that it is really a pagan festival which has been given a Christian face. The Bible never suggests we should keep Christmas. But it does tell us to keep the Sabbath, and to live soberly – with restraint. So we should restrain ourselves in the way we seek

enjoyment and in what we buy. How good if the people of Glasgow would love the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Bible and would “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12)!

The Speaking Elephant

An elephant called Kosik, who lives in an amusement park in South Korea, is said to be able to speak. By putting his trunk in his mouth and moving it around as he breathes out, he is able to say seven simple words in Korean – words such as “yes”, “no” and “good”.

Another animal that is supposed to be able to speak is a beluga whale, called Noc, which is kept in a naval research establishment in California. The biologists who work with Noc realised that the words, “Out, out,” which they heard when they were in the water with him, came from him. He was trying to imitate human speech.

Do these creatures actually speak? Not really – they are just making noises that sound like speech. The first record of speech is in Genesis 1:3, where we are told that God said, “Let there be light”. Then “there was light”. The first human speech we read of was Adam’s, who was made in the image of God. When God gave Eve to him to be his wife, he said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23).

So our ability to reason and speak shows that we are made in the image of God, even although that image is sadly ruined by sin. It also shows that we have a soul, which animals do not have. In this world it is only human beings to whom God has given the amazing gift of speech.

One reason why God has given us this wonderful ability is that we may speak to one another – but there is a more important reason! We are to use our tongues, lips and mouths to glorify God by worshipping Him. For example, we must, at least, use words in prayer and praise to Him.

I am sure you know it is not enough to have words when worshipping God – we must also be sincere. We must not be like those of whom Jesus said, “This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me” (Matthew 15:8).

Should we not then be asking God to keep us from saying what is wrong and to help us always to say what is right? David prayed to God: “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3). The Bible also says, “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). May God help us to have words that are true and pure – speech that is honouring to God and useful to others. *NMR*

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