

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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The Young People's Magazine

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No 4

Solomon's Wisdom

Even newspaper reporters refer to Solomon and his wisdom. They speak about the case when two women came asking him to decide who was really the mother of the one surviving baby. They each had a child but one baby died and both women claimed to be the mother of the living baby. Solomon called for a sword to be brought and seemed ready to divide the living baby in two and give half of it to each mother. What happened next was exactly what he expected: although one woman was quite prepared for Solomon to go ahead as he had suggested, the real mother objected and wanted the other woman to be given the living child. Solomon had shown his wisdom, and the real mother went home with her baby.

Where did Solomon's remarkable wisdom come from? It was a special gift from God. In a vision, God had asked Solomon what he wanted most, and Solomon asked for wisdom, so that he could rule well over the country of Israel; he had felt like a little child in the face of his great responsibilities. His request was itself a wise choice, and we would do well to follow his example. God will not appear to you in a vision, but in the Bible He encourages you to ask Him for wisdom: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). If you ask Him, God will give you wisdom generously and He will not reprove you for doing so.

Whatever situation you are in, you should be conscious that you need God's help so that you do what is right before God and react wisely to whatever happens. If you are still in school, you need God to help you to do your work well, speak wisely to others and resist temptation. And the same applies if you are studying in university or in employment. Especially when someone says something to you that you do not expect, your first reaction should be to ask God, perhaps very quickly, for His help, so that you will be able to give a wise answer. It is so easy to answer in a way that is not quite honest when you have not had time to consider your answer. How wise then to ask God to keep you from sinning!

But what is wisdom? Solomon has an answer to this question; among his

many proverbs you will find this: "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright" (Proverbs 15:2). Some people have lots of information, but they do not use their knowledge properly because they have very little wisdom. But wise people use their knowledge well.

We especially need wisdom to choose the right way as we travel through this world so that, when we die, we will be brought to heaven. If we are left to ourselves, we are so foolish that, however much we know about the danger of hell and the blessedness of heaven, we will keep going on in the wrong direction. We may have the knowledge, but we are not using it well if we do not actually believe in Christ as the Saviour of sinners and turn away from our sinful ways. If you do not believe and repent, you certainly do not have spiritual wisdom. How earnestly you should cry to God to give you this wisdom! It is He who makes sinners wise unto salvation.

Most certainly we need the wisdom that comes from above if we are to reach heaven at last. Yet that wisdom can be found in this world; we do not need to go to heaven to find it – for God has revealed it in the Bible. Indeed, Solomon himself can also give us an answer to this question: What is the wise way through life? Again you will find his answer in the Book of Proverbs: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (9:10); if you live in the fear of God, you are starting to show spiritual wisdom.

What does it mean to *fear God*? It means to have a holy respect for God, so that we keep His commandments; those who fear God do not want to offend Him by sinning against Him. The point is not that they are afraid of the consequences of breaking His commandments; it means that they do not want God to be offended by what they do – which shows that they love Him.

Solomon gained a great reputation for wisdom; even kings came to hear the wise things he had to say. And the Queen of Sheba came, by camel, a distance of probably 1400 miles (2300 km) to hear Solomon's wisdom, and she was not disappointed. He was able to answer all her questions, even the most difficult ones. She is an example for us: we should go to wise people to ask for help in our difficulties, not least our spiritual difficulties. Especially we should ask the One who has infinite wisdom to help us understand what He has revealed in His Word. Go to Him with the greatest of questions. One of them should be: "What must I do to be saved?" When the jailer in Philippi asked this question, it was good that he was in the company of two wise men, Paul and Silas, who knew the answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". Yet you may know the answer and not have the wisdom to put it into practice. All the more reason for you to go to God with the question and ask Him for grace to obey the answer.

Always ask God to give you wisdom as you read the Bible. And remember

that you need wisdom so that you can apply, to particular situations, the knowledge you have obtained from it; it is God that must give you this wisdom. So, unless you have a new heart – unless you are born again – you will not have true wisdom, and you will not be properly prepared to meet the very real difficulties that arise from time to time in life, and sometimes most unexpectedly. Even if you are born again, the better you know the Bible, the better prepared you will be for the various difficult situations you will meet in this world.

But Solomon was not perfectly wise, by no means. Though he had so much wisdom, he did something very foolish: he married a heathen wife. And a lot of other foolish things flowed from that. He married many more heathen wives, and they turned his heart towards their false gods. It seems amazing that such a wise man could act so foolishly. But we ought to learn that we must always depend on God for wisdom; we must never stop asking Him to keep us from thinking and speaking and acting foolishly. And great wisdom is needed in choosing a wife or husband; you very much need God to direct you so that you would choose wisely.

But God can bring good out of the foolishness of His people, though they may then have to go through difficult experiences to teach them how sinful it is to drift away from Him. And God brought good out of Solomon's foolishness. For one thing, as he reflected on his foolishness, he wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes. He writes there that he used his natural wisdom to search out "concerning all things that are done under heaven". And what was his conclusion? He tells us what he discovered: "Behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (1:13,14). He could find nothing satisfying in a life lived away from God.

Why then should anyone today try to live a life away from God? It is going to end in a feeling of vanity and vexation of spirit. This is not merely Solomon's conclusion; when he wrote these words, he was doing so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So they are perfectly reliable, like all the rest of Scripture. It is madness for anyone today to follow Solomon's footsteps away from God; his experience is recorded in the Bible to warn others away from going on the same path. What disappointment, what misery – even eternal misery – could be avoided by wisely heeding the warnings we should notice as we read about Solomon's life!

Listen then once more to Solomon's wisdom as he tells us: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14). Yes, be wise, fear God, and all will be well at last.

*For Junior Readers***Christ Will not Cast Away the Sinner**

Last month you may have read here about John Newton, the wicked sea captain who was converted and later became a minister of the gospel. How this should encourage each of us. Perhaps it reminds you of the words of the Apostle Paul: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief".

This was something which Newton never forgot. At the age of 82 he said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour!"

Another godly man who appreciated these two great facts was John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He also wrote a lovely book called, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, in which he emphasised two great facts. One was: the greatest sinner who comes to Christ will be welcomed. The other was: the great Saviour will never cast the sinner out. He went on to imagine a talk between a sinner and the Saviour of sinners.

"But I am a great sinner", says the sinner.

"I will in no wise cast out", says Christ.

"But I am a hard-hearted sinner."

"I will in no wise cast out" says Christ.

"But I have sinned against light".

"I will in no wise cast out" says Christ.

"But I have sinned against mercy".

"I will in no wise cast out" says Christ.

"But I have no good thing to bring with me".

"I will in no wise cast out" says Christ.

Will you not accept the first truth, that you are a great sinner? Then pray that God, in mercy, would open the eyes of your soul to see that Christ is a great Saviour. How thankful you will then be for that promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out".

J van Kralingen

Ready to Go to Heaven

The boy was still quite young, but he noticed that his mother enjoyed one woman's visits more than anyone else's. The two women talked about spiritual things and the boy listened with a kind of awe. Sometimes he even thought that heaven was very near. And these conversations had far more of an effect on him than any of the sermons he used to hear.

When he left home in his American village to go to college, his mother's friend gave him some good advice. She specially emphasised these words from the Bible: "And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not" (Jeremiah 45:5).

Looking back he remembered that often, when ambition took hold of his mind and would have led into temptation, "I have called to mind those words and prayed that I might seek only the things which belong to Christ". God used the good woman's words, and especially His own words, to keep the young man back from spiritual danger.

He was only able to come home once during his whole college course. When he did, he spent much of his time with his young friends and did not get round to visiting the godly lady who had given him such good advice. In a letter he received after returning to college, his mother told him how hurt she and her friend were because he had not visited the good lady. There and then he made up his mind never again to neglect his responsibilities to older people.

When his college course was over, the young man hurried home to visit his father, who was so seriously ill that death was not far away. He found his mother's friend supporting his mother, giving help about the house and comforting her from the Word of God. His father died, and his mother did not live for much longer. Again her friend was at her side at the end. Soon afterwards, the young man left home for some far-away part of the United States; probably that was when he became a minister.

Many years passed before he returned to his birthplace. He arrived on a Saturday evening and the next day took the services in the church in which he had been brought up. As he looked around the congregation, he could recognise only a few faces. Many of those whom he used to know had died; the appearance of others had greatly changed with the passing of the years. He looked around for his mother's special friend, but she was nowhere to be seen. Afterwards he asked about her and was told that she was still alive; she lived some distance beyond the village; she was very poor and was now completely blind.

The next morning he hurried off to call on her. As he walked up a long valley, a cold autumn wind was blowing the falling leaves along his path. The lady's house was almost a mile from any other dwelling and it was badly in need of repair.

The minister knocked at the door and was invited in. "I cannot tell who you are until you speak," she told him, "for I am stone blind."

"You used to know my mother well", he explained.

"And you are the son of that precious woman!" she exclaimed, recognising

his voice. "You are dear to me for her sake," she added, "and for Christ's sake too."

After he sat down beside her, she went on: "I am very thankful to see you. I promised your mother to pray for you daily, and I have not forgotten my promise. My heart has rejoiced when I have heard of your labours in the Lord [as a minister]." Then she quoted the words: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58), before adding, "Everything else is in vain. I have seen and felt that. But labour in the Lord is not in vain. 'He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.' You have found Christ a blessed Master."

The minister made a comment about Christ's faithfulness to her, and she assured him: "Not one jot or tittle of His Word has failed. All His promises have been yea and amen." And she quoted the words from Psalm 119: "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me".

The minister then reminded her of the words in Hebrews 12:6: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth", and his friend replied, "I have experienced many and sore afflictions, but they were all necessary to fit me for His purposes". She spoke about a time when somebody claimed her land. When she realised that she would have to give it up, it seemed very hard for her to do so and be left with nothing. "But", she went on, "when the time came, it was not so hard as I expected. I found I needed something to make heaven seem more precious to me, and the loss of our property had that effect. When I felt that I had no home but heaven, I could give my heart more entirely to the work of preparing for heaven."

"This place was offered us by a good man, and we had just moved here when my dear husband was taken sick and died. I felt it was a great mercy that he was taken home. He was very feeble and could never have been very comfortable in this house. The Saviour knew it and took him to the mansion which He had prepared for him. I knew that my loss was his gain and that God had done it in mercy; still I wept sore. I had my Bible and I could see to read; that bore me up in the deep waters. I can say with David, "Unless Thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction'."

The minister asked how long it was since she had lost her sight. She told him: "It is now nearly 10 years since I saw the face of a friend or read a word in the blessed Book. How thankful I am that I learned to love it in my youth and that I have portions of it in my heart! Tell the young to commit to memory the Word of God, and then, if they become blind, they will have a source of comfort that cannot be taken away from them."

But had her spiritual eyesight decayed? he asked.

"I think I have had clearer views of God than I ever had when I could

see with the natural eye.” She felt she could fix her mind upon God more completely now than when she was able to see various things that would distract her from thinking about Him. And so “I sometimes feel as though I ought to be thankful that I am blind”.

The minister then asked if her needs for this life were being supplied.

She told him: “You know what the Apostle says, ‘He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?’ – all things that He sees that we need. It is not for us poor shortsighted creatures to say what we ought to have. I have to depend on God for my daily bread, and it is sweeter to do so than to depend on property that we call our own.”

“And are you ready to go hence when the Saviour calls?”

“Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, I can say at times that at least I have that desire. There are times when I long to be with God. How precious are these thoughts to me! They sometimes fill my soul.” And so she did not worry about anything else.

“Do you wish to know how to live above the world?” she then asked the minister. And she answered her own question: “Let the thoughts of God fill your mind. I used to think a great deal about myself and my shortcomings. While thus occupied I did not rise [up to God in my thoughts]. Now my thoughts are chiefly occupied with God, and I am lifted above care and trouble, borne nearer and nearer to heaven.”

The minister kept on speaking to her until she was exhausted. Then he prayed with her and said goodbye. He left the village and returned to his church. Soon afterwards he heard that the old lady had died. He thought of his mother and her friend now reunited in heaven, “to part no more for ever”. And he exclaimed, “May I follow them!” That should be our desire also before God; let us therefore “seek the Lord while He may be found”.

God's Work in Ness

4. Finlay Cook

Rev Angus Smith

The last two articles described some of the Gaelic teachers who did much to spread the gospel in Lewis.

The first Evangelical minister in Lewis was Alexander Macleod from Stoer, in Sutherland. He came to Uig, Lewis, in 1824, largely through the influence of Mrs Stewart Mackenzie of Seaforth, who had great sympathy for the new Evangelical preaching on the Island. Until Macleod came, family

worship was unknown, even in manses. He stopped having the sacrament of the Lord's Supper between 1824 and 1827, because the people were so ignorant of spiritual things. He was called before the Presbytery for keeping people back from the Lord's Supper, and for preaching disturbing sermons, but he brazened it out. He was fond of preaching on the everlasting covenant, a doctrine which glorifies God alone in salvation. Such was the type of preaching which moulded the coming generation.

Finlay Cook was the first Evangelical minister in Ness. When he came there in 1829, the people as a whole had turned against William Macrae, the Moderate minister. A parliamentary church was built in Cross, Ness, the year before Cook became minister there. It was so called because, by an Act of Parliament, money was provided to build extra churches in the Highlands and Islands; 42 churches were built, including the one at Cross. The church and manse at Cross were designed by Thomas Telford, the famous engineer. The church cost £750 and the manse £720.

Cook left the Halsary and Halladale Mission, in Caithness, to come to Cross. Joseph Mackay and Janet Macleod from Reay came to his first communion season in Cross. Janet waited on for six months before leaving by ship. After passing Cape Wrath, on the far north-west of Scotland, the ship was too close to the shore, considering the fierce wind. The captain ordered Janet to be brought up on deck, the only place of hope if the ship was to go ashore. She answered, "I'll stay where I am. Mr Cook and Joseph Mackay have not gone to bed yet, and they always pray for those at sea before they do so." They were saved, for the wind shifted, and the captain later called her the woman with the greatest faith he had ever known.

At Cook's first communion, Joseph and a friend met a professor of religion who was very talkative. He kept up very well with all of Joseph's spiritual probing; then the friend asked the man, "What was the shore from which the disciples were fishing when they laboured all night and caught nothing?" "The shore of their own disconsolate feelings, where no wholesome fish were ever caught," he replied.

Donald Sage said that when Cook came to Cross, the preaching of the Moderate ministers, of whom there were two in Lewis, represented the ruins of what the gospel presentation had once been. Communion Mondays saw tents set up to sell alcohol, and drunken riots were common after the thanksgiving service.

Finlay Cook wrote his sermon thoughts on a slate, and later erased them. He never wrote out his sermons in full. When he was leaving Ness he asked the young Christians what kind of minister they would desire to succeed him. The reply was, "A dead dog at the King's table" – meaning a minister

who saw his own unworthiness, as Mephibosheth did in the presence of David, yet who constantly fed from David's table. Among Cook's precious sayings was: "You are there, poor creature, and you are saying, 'I fear I have not had enough law work'. Perhaps that fear itself will be law enough for you all your days."

His leather-bound Gaelic pulpit Bible, which he used in Inverness, later on ended up in the pulpit in Ness, and is now in the local museum there. When he came to Ness, quite a number of communicants had been struck off the roll by Macrae, the Moderate minister. Many came from Barvas to hear Cook, and Macrae, whose church was in Barvas, began to persecute him. Cook, when preaching, once pointedly asked those who had come from Barvas, why exactly they were attending his ministry in Ness. As a result some ceased to come, and Cook later stated, "My neighbour's flock has departed, but those who were heavy with young stayed behind" – those who were needing help from the preaching.

While the Lord was blessing his work in Ness, Finlay Cook noticed many things accompanying that work which were foolish and dangerous. He himself was a product of the Arran revival, being converted as a young lad. He easily recognised things which had hindered the work of grace in that island.

He had a Christian help-meet in his wife, who died when she was still quite young. He felt her death keenly and said to a friend, "I cannot see any way in which the death of my wife can be among those things that work together for my good, but only that the Lord's Word states it" (see Romans 8:28). He died at the age of 80, having preached his last sermon just two Sabbaths before his death.

The Bible's Teaching on Justification

7. Christ as a Substitute for Sinners

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 pointed to some of the Bible's teaching about Christ *bearing sin*, which means "to bear the punishment due to sin".

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ delivers sinners from the punishment of their sins by offering Himself as a sacrifice instead of them. In the Old Testament, there were penalties for breaking the various commands about ceremonies; they were removed by taking bulls and goats

and sacrificing them instead. So the punishment of sin is removed by the Son of God becoming a substitute and dying instead of sinners. When an Israelite had transgressed and was not allowed to come to the temple, he knew the way of atonement and reconciliation; so now everyone whose conscience is disturbed because of his sin may draw near to God through that new and living way which Christ has consecrated through His flesh. Thus we may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The idea of substitution is to be found in all these forms of words we have mentioned, including: "Christ . . . made a curse for us", "made sin for us", "bore our sins". The writers are saying that Christ took their place, He suffered instead of them, He acted as their representative. So all that Christ did and suffered is regarded as what every believer has done and suffered.

Believers are those who are "in Christ". This is how they are commonly described. They are so united to him that they are declared to have done what He did for them. When He died, they died; when He rose, they rose; as He lives, they shall live also. There are many places in which believers are said to have died in Christ. If one died for all, says Paul, then all died. He that died with Christ is justified from sin – that is, he is freed from its condemnation; and if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall live with Him. So every believer may say with Paul, I was crucified with Christ.

Similarly Christ's resurrection secures both the spiritual life and future resurrection of all His people. If we have been united to Him in His death, we shall be in His resurrection. If we died with Him, we shall live with Him. Says Paul, "God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus".

It is on this ground also that Paul says that Christ rose as the firstfruits of the dead – not merely the first in order, but as securing the resurrection of His people. For "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive". As our union with Adam secures our death, union with Christ secures the resurrection of His people. Adam is a type of Him that was to come – of Christ. As Adam was our natural head, the poison of sin flows in all our veins. As Christ is the spiritual head of His people, eternal life in Him descends to all His members. It is not they that live, but Christ lives in them.

This teaching is the source of the humility, the joy and the confidence which the writers of the Bible so often express. In themselves they were nothing, and deserved nothing, but in Christ they possessed all things. So they counted all things but loss that they might be found in Him. They wanted to know nothing, to preach nothing, to glory in nothing but in Christ and Him crucified. It is their union with Christ that this speaks of.

There are also many verses which connect salvation with the blood of

Jesus Christ, His death, or His cross. They not only teach the fact that Christ's death secures the pardon of sin, but also how it does so. To this class belong such statements as these: "The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin"; "We have redemption through His blood"; "Having made peace through the blood of His cross"; "Being now justified by His blood"; "Made nigh by the blood of Christ". All these teach that the death of Christ was a sacrifice. Blood was the means of atonement, and without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness. Salvation is referred to Christ's death, His cross, His flesh, for these terms are interchanged as they have the same meaning. Sinners are reconciled to God by the death of His Son; they are reconciled by His cross; they are reconciled by the body of His flesh through death; they are delivered from the law by the body of Christ.

Everyone knows what is meant when it is said that "Christ died for the ungodly": that He gave "His life a ransom for many"; that He died "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God". Seeing then that believers owe everything to the blessed Saviour suffering to put away sin, we do not wonder that the cross is made so prominent in the plan of salvation. We are not surprised at Paul's anxiety "lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect", or that he should call the preaching of the gospel "the preaching of the cross", or that he should preach Christ crucified, both to Jews and Greeks, as the wisdom of God and the power of God, or that he should want to glory in nothing except in the cross of Christ.

No truth is more necessary for us to know than how to escape the wrath of God due to us for sin, and no truth is taught more plainly. Besides all that is said about Christ bearing sin, the Scriptures set him forth as a priest, so that we may understand more fully how He works out salvation. Long before He came into the world, it was said that the Messiah was to be a priest: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek". The Apostle defines a *priest* to be a man "ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins".

Jesus Christ is the only real priest in the universe. All others were either pretenders, or shadows of Him. He had every necessary qualification for this work. He was a man. "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part of the same . . . that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest", one who can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities", for He "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin".

He was sinless. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless . . . and separate from sinners." He was the Son of God. The law made men priests who were sinners. From the dignity of Christ's Person, who has the divine nature, the Apostle concludes that His sacrifice is effective, that He

is a priest for ever, and that "He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him".

He was duly appointed a priest. He "glorified not Himself to be made an high priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son," said also, "Thou art a priest for ever". He is the only real priest and so His coming put an end to the work of all others. He had a suitable offering to present. This sacrifice was not the blood of goats or of calves, but His own blood; it was Himself He offered to God. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

He has passed into the heavens. As the high priest was required to enter the most holy place with the blood of atonement, so Christ has entered, not "into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, where "He ever liveth to make intercession".

So "we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God", and let the reader remember what that means. He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" when "He had by Himself purged our sins" and made "reconciliation for the sins of the people". Thus every humble believer who commits his soul into the hands of this High Priest may come with boldness to the throne of grace. And he may be assured that he shall find mercy, and grace to help in time of need.

Doves at War and Doves at Peace

King David watched the birds sing their lovely songs in the trees around him, beside some springs of water. We sing about them in Psalm 104:12:

"By them the fowls of heaven shall have their habitation,
Which do among the branches sing with delectation."

Here we have a lovely sight and lovely sounds, when birds behave as they usually do.

But some birds sometimes behave in a most unexpected way. One day, as I watched a dove feeding on seeds below our bird table, another similar dove suddenly flew down, attacked it and tried to drive it away. The feeding dove fought back and seemed to be winning, but the attacker finally won and went on to eat the food by itself.

That was the first time I saw something so unexpected. I say "unexpected", because doves, as you know, are peaceable birds and quickly fly away from attackers. Indeed, doves are emblems of peace and love, and are well known for mating for life.

The Bible teaches that we are to be dove-like, living together at peace and

loving one another. One expects to see peaceable and loving behaviour in families, but sadly, we sometimes see and hear the unexpected – squabbles and angry words. And we do not expect to see quarrelling between true Christians, but alas the unexpected does happen sometimes – even Paul and Barnabas disagreed strongly with one another.

But we are to be like doves in the way they *usually* behave – not in the way they behave *unusually*. We are to love one another in our families, and we are to love those who belong to the family of God. Those who are in God’s family are truly bonded together. But what is it that binds them together? Their love to Christ. They are one in Him, even although they sometimes disagree.

Christ calls His believing follower, “My dove”. Believers are Christ’s doves because they have fled from the punishment they deserve for their sins and are safely hiding in Christ by faith – just as doves fly from danger and hide in crevices in the rocks.

How much we need (if we are not there already) to be safely with His doves in the cleft of the rock – in Christ Himself, the Rock of Salvation. May we, by grace, follow the example of David, who said to the Lord, “I flee to Thee to cover me” (Psalm 143:9). Then we will know something of the blessing of living in peace and love with Christ and His followers. *NMR*

For Younger Readers

God Knows Everything

A family were moving house. They were going to live in a village some distance away from the little town where the father would work. To get there, you had to drive along narrow, winding lanes.

There was no use ordering a big removal van to bring their furniture to the new house. The van was bound to get stuck in one of these narrow lanes. So the father asked the removal company to send two smaller vans.

But the company sent a big van. Perhaps they thought that they knew better. Anyway, the men on the van loaded it up with all the furniture. The driver climbed into the van and they all drove away. At last they reached the village.

Then what happened? The van became stuck between the stone walls on each side of the narrow road. It was just what the father warned them about. But nobody at the company listened to him. So

they had to send two small vans to the village. They had to unload all the furniture from the big van and move it into the smaller vans.

Yes, the furniture arrived safely in the new home at last. But how much better it would have been if the company had listened to the man who knew about the roads – about the narrow, winding lanes.

God knows everything about us. In the Bible, He tells us how we should live. And we should listen because He knows best.

He tells us not to have any other gods but Him. That is the First Commandment. He is the one, real God. But lots of people want to have other gods. Many people make a god of themselves – they love themselves more than God.

So their life will be all wrong. They are a bit like whoever sent the big furniture van, someone who did not do what he was told. They make things very difficult for themselves.

God tells us to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. That is the Fourth Commandment. He wants us to use the Sabbath to learn about Him. Most people want to do just what *they* want every day – including God's day. So they do not keep the Sabbath holy. How wrong they are!

And God tells you to honour your father and your mother. That is the Fifth Commandment. God wants you to love your parents and to obey them.

If you do not do what your father and mother tell you, things will go wrong in your family. Remember how things went wrong for the men in the furniture van. No one listened to the man who knew best. Always remember that God knows best about everything.

Australia & NZ Youth Conference

The fourth Youth Conference in Australia, in January 2013, saw 30 young people gather and enjoy, not only the five very instructive papers, but each others' company. The conference was again at the Winmalee Christian Conference Centre, as it had proved a most suitable venue the previous two years. The meals were of a high standard and the sleeping quarters comfortable, with air conditioning all round. It was encouraging to have some young visitors from Canada and Holland.

The first paper, “Martin Luther and the Reformation”, was given by Mr Hank Optland. He explained how the Lord used a number of crises to awaken Martin Luther to eternal realities and how Johann von Staupitz helped him by showing him something of Christ. After some time, Luther was led to see how God’s perfect justice and mercy could be reconciled, through the words of Romans 1:17, “The just shall live by faith”, which Luther named “the gate of paradise”. The Roman Church duped poor sinners into believing that the indulgences would bring forgiveness, or shorten the time spent in purgatory. Johann Tetzel shamelessly used the sales pitch: “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs”. Half of the proceeds were used to finance St Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Martin Luther exposed this fraud by nailing his 95 theses on the church door at Wittenberg. These were soon distributed all around Europe in many languages. This led to Martin Luther being excommunicated by the Pope and to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. Luther went on to translate the Bible into German, so that people could read the truths for themselves. The young folk were split into groups of five or six to consider eight questions which Mr Optland had prepared. Afterwards they were reunited to consider their answers and their further questions. This happened after each of the papers.

Rev E A Rayner gave the evening paper, “The Regulative Principle with respect to Instrumental Music in Public Worship”. He clearly showed that, although instrumental music was introduced into the Old Testament Church, it was restricted to the Levites in the temple worship. When the temple worship came to an end with the death of the Saviour – when He cried, “It is finished” – the Levitical priesthood, together with the sacrifices, feast days and musical instruments were all at an end.

He further showed there were no musical instruments in the early New Testament Church, where the worship was based on the worship in the synagogue. For 1200 years, this remained the case until musical instruments were brought in by the Roman Church. Discussions afterwards showed that the young folk understood and appreciated the stand taken by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and others on the Regulative Principle.

On Wednesday morning, after breakfast and worship, Rev Jett Smith presented a paper entitled, “Mormonism: Not the Church of Jesus Christ”. He gave a very clear rebuttal of the Mormons’ claim to be the Church of Jesus Christ by showing how Scripture opposed their teachings. For example, they believe that there are many gods; they have Christ-dishonouring views of priesthood; they deny that there is a hell and that Christ’s atonement was sufficient; and they give a place to man’s works in order to obtain salvation.

The next part of the day was kept free for all to enjoy the surroundings of the conference centre for a bush walk or one of the many other activities available. Thankfully the temperature dropped to around 28 degrees from around 40 degrees the previous day. The centre staff made sure there was plenty to eat, including an abundance of fruit.

The evening paper by Rev G B Macdonald, on "Assurance of Personal Salvation", was most warmly received. It sought to answer such questions as: "Is assurance of personal salvation possible in this life?" and "Can assurance of personal salvation be lost?" The example of the Apostle Paul was mentioned to show that a sinner can be assured of personal salvation in this life. He could write to Timothy: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day".

Mr Macdonald stressed the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit and noted the benefit of the means of grace, including the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In the discussion afterwards, the young people were asked to consider the differences between presumption and assurance, as well as the relationship between conscience and assurance. Such questions led to profitable discussion, both then and later.

The final paper was on Thursday morning, when Mr Calvin MacKenzie spoke on "The Westminster Assembly – its Work and Legacy". He gave a very full powerpoint presentation that traced the background of the Assembly, including the role of King Henry VIII in the English Reformation. He referred to differences within the Assembly related to the political and religious issues of the time. He also explained why England went back to an Episcopalian form of Church government. He mentioned the importance of the Scots Commissioners' contribution and gave a brief sketch of each of them. The young people appreciated the benefits we derive from the Assembly's work to this day.

Once more, with the conclusion of the papers and the discussions, we went upstairs for a very nice lunch and continuing discussions and by then it was time to pack up and go home. A good selection of books from the Sydney bookroom were available for purchase and we were very heartened to have sold over \$500 worth of good literature. We are grateful to the Most High for precious opportunities of fellowship and pray that there may be much fruit following to His honour. We also give thanks for safe travelling.

The Committee expects that the Youth Conference in January 2014 will be held in Rotorua, New Zealand, DV. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

J van Praag, Chairman

The Leper

This poem by John Newton is based on the healing of the leper in Matthew 8:2-3.

Of't as the leper's case I read,
My own described I feel;
Sin is a leprosy indeed
Which none but *Christ* can heal.

Awhile I would have passed for well,
And strove my spots to hide;
Till it broke out incurable,
Too plain to be denied.

Then from the saints I sought to flee
And dreaded to be seen;
I thought they all would point at me
And cry, "Unclean, unclean!"

What anguish did my soul endure,
Till hope and patience ceased!
The more I strove myself to cure,
The more the plague increased.

While thus I lay distressed, I saw
The Saviour passing by;
To Him, though filled with shame and awe,
I raised my mournful cry.

Lord, Thou canst heal me if Thou wilt,
For Thou canst all things do;
O cleanse my leprous soul from guilt,
My filthy heart renew!

He heard and, with a gracious look,
Pronounced the healing word;
"I will, be clean". And while He spoke
I felt my health restored.

Come, lepers, seize the present hour,
The Saviour's grace to prove;
He can relieve, for He is power.
He will, for He is love.

Looking Around Us

A Promise of Healing?

On January 4 a diabetic named Bode, from east London, phoned a programme on Faith World TV for help. From the studio, programme host Bishop Simon Iheanacho told the caller to lay his hand on his leg and said, “I cause diabetes to die in your body”. He at once thanked God “for this miracle right now over your life in Jesus’s name”. Bode was then asked to repeat the words: “It is well with me”.

The danger is that, if Bode took the Bishop’s words seriously, he may have stopped his tablets or his other diabetes treatment. Then his diabetes would probably become seriously worse. If he continued to neglect his treatment, early death would be the likely result.

Someone pointed out: “The pastor should have recommended the caller sought medical help”. Others too have pointed out the dangers in Bishop Iheanacho’s claim that he has the power to heal. As a result he has begun to warn, “If God heals you, please make sure you go to your doctor to certify that you have been healed or have been made whole and let your doctor give you a clearance on this very matter”. And, “Our prayer is to offer a prayer of faith but the medical people satisfy that people are truly healed”.

But the prayer of faith must be based on a promise from God. Yes, Christ did promise that, if the disciples laid hands on sick people, they would get better. This was, of course, done in kindness to the sick; it was also a sign to unbelievers that there was supernatural power in the Christian Church.

Has the Christian Church lost its supernatural power? No, it has not. It is still an instrument in God’s hand for the conversion of sinners. And for God to convert a sinner is far more wonderful than any healing of the body, for much greater power is needed. But the time for such healing has long since come to an end. God gave this power to the disciples for only a limited time – until the Christian Church had been properly established, when the last part of the Bible had been written.

Many people will feel tremendously disappointed when the promised cure does not take place, and their illness or their disability continues. They will probably feel badly deceived by someone who claims a successful healing which does not happen. And they may turn against Christianity altogether, rejecting the authority of the Bible and refusing any longer to believe God exists. To give a false promise of healing may keep sick people away from a doctor – dangerously. It is far more serious if it turns them away from God.

Price £1.00