

# The Young People's Magazine

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## Health

We are bombarded by health warnings and health advice from every direction. And much of it is very sensible. Recently the World Health Organisation (WHO) published a World Cancer Report, which predicts that the number of cancer cases throughout the world may increase by 50% before 2020 and that the number of people dying from cancer will grow from 6 million to 10 million. One reason for the increase is that people are living longer, but experts predict that a third of these cases could be prevented by healthier lifestyles. The report highlights smoking as a major cause of cancers, along with poor diets and lack of exercise. Indeed, nine out of ten cases of lung cancer are linked to smoking. Other recent research indicates that smoking cannabis is much more likely to lead to cancer than smoking tobacco. It is clearly right that cannabis should continue to be classed as an illegal drug – it has other harmful effects, such as making people less inhibited, so that they more readily commit various sins.

It is obviously right that all reasonable steps should be taken to protect our health. As the Shorter Catechism teaches, the Sixth Commandment requires “all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others”. One “lawful endeavour to preserve our own life” is that those who smoke should stop so that they do not cause any further damage to their health; a “lawful endeavour to preserve the life of others” is that those who smoke should not do so where other people will have to inhale their smoke.

Governments and other organisations put great effort into preventing disease. But Bernard Stewart, a cancer specialist from the University of New South Wales, one of the authors of the WHO report, claimed that “governments, physicians and health educators at all levels could do much more to help people change their behaviour to avoid preventable cancers”.

Yet there is something far more serious than any disease of our bodies – the disease that affects our souls, and will result in eternal death if it is not cured. David complained: “My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. . . . For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.” He was disturbed because he felt the sin of his

heart to be so very serious. And he wisely cried to God to cure him of this terrible disease.

Of course, no government can cure the disease of sin, but they could do much more to restrain it. Every government has a duty before God to promote true religion. Instead, governments everywhere tend to do the opposite, promoting sin and encouraging false religion. The British government, for instance, adopts a multi-faith approach to religion; they never bring themselves to say that Christianity is true and other religions are false. At the same time, they pass laws that encourage people to sin.

True Sabbath-keeping is a great blessing; it promotes the health of our souls. If we make good use of our Sabbaths and put away the things of the world as much as possible, we are free to give our attention to public worship, reading the Bible and other good books, and prayer. These are means which God has appointed for the well-being of our souls. At one time there were laws which promoted Sabbath-keeping but, one by one, these laws have been repealed by successive governments. These governments showed that they did not care about the spiritual health of their people. Concerned about the bodily health of their people, they have passed laws regulating how food is prepared in restaurants and processing plants, for instance. No one is going to object to that unless the regulations are unreasonable. But surely it is far more important to be concerned for the health of the soul than for the health of the body.

When governments neglect their duty to the spiritual health of the nation, can we expect businesses to be any better? It may be an exaggeration to say that companies exist merely to make money – though if they did not make money, they would soon go bankrupt and they would no longer exist! Many companies do very useful work in producing drugs and equipment which help to restore bodily health. However, many companies are producing what does great damage to the health of souls; they are making money from what is likely to help multitudes in the direction of a lost eternity.

Many books and television programmes are so full of immorality that they are highly dangerous. God has given the Seventh Commandment to set bounds on the relationships between men and women – for their good. To cross these boundaries is sin. And to turn such sins into entertainment is highly damaging to the souls of readers and viewers. They will more easily give in to the temptation to commit such sins themselves, and their minds will be much more likely to run riot in thinking about these sins. If you knew that the food on a plate in front of you was full of germs, you would not eat it. You would throw it out because it would make you unwell – you might become seriously ill. In the same sort of way, you should avoid everything

that will make sin more attractive. It can seriously damage the health of your soul – to adapt the large warning message placed on cigarette packets in Britain today.

One day someone said to an old Texan who had been an army officer, “Captain, that is a beautiful place for a church”. “Don’t talk to me about churches,” replied the ungodly old man; “if you do, you will drive me out of the country.” He was making clear how dreadfully unhealthy his soul was; he hated the thought of coming into contact with God’s truth.

Some time afterwards Daniel Baker was preaching on the words from Daniel: “Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting”. He began to speak about those who are given to swearing, and he weighed them in the balances. He quoted an old writer who said, “The devil sometimes turns fisherman. When he fishes for ordinary sinners, he is willing to go to some expense; he baits his hook with the riches of the world, the honours of the world and the pleasures of the world; but when he fishes for profane swearers, he throws them the naked hook and they bite at the naked hook – cheap in the devil’s account.”

The Captain had been notorious for swearing and the preacher’s description went as an arrow into his heart. Shortly afterwards he was converted. The minister asked him, “What first set you to thinking?” “O, Mr Baker,” he replied, “the idea of the devil catching me with a naked hook. I could not stand that.” One evidence that he had been savingly changed was his eagerness now to be at a service, although at one time he did not want to see a church built anywhere near his home. One Wednesday evening, Baker returned to the place where the Captain lived, to find a service in progress. “O, I am glad of it,” the Captain exclaimed, “I am so hungry for preaching. I have not heard a sermon since last Sabbath.” What a change! He was now spiritually healthy. He had a good appetite for the Word of God.

A doctor said, “We don’t need new science. If the knowledge, technology and control strategies outlined in the World Cancer Report were applied globally, we would make major advances in preventing and treating cancers over the next 20 years and beyond.” He would surely welcome the new discoveries that new research may bring, but the point he was making is: if we would make good use of what we already know, the situation would be much better than it is. Similarly with our souls. We do not need any new revelation from heaven. If we would make good use of what we already know, we would have healthy souls. God is saying: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezekiel 18:30) – especially the eternal ruin which follows spiritual disease. But, remember, “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”

(John 3:3). It is a health warning we disregard at our peril. Only by the great spiritual change of the new birth can we become spiritually healthy; only then will we be fit to enter heaven.

Ask God to give you a new heart; then you will be on your way to spiritual health. And ask Him to give you, in your soul, a good appetite, so that you would be greedy for the Word of God; nothing could be better for the well-being of your soul.

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## **“The Lord Was with Joseph”**

### **5. Wrongly Imprisoned**

*Rev Neil M Ross*

This is another part of a paper given at the 2000 Youth Conference. Last month's article dealt with Joseph's victory over severe temptation.

Joseph now had to endure a very severe and prolonged trial – the worst in his whole life. He was *imprisoned on a false charge* of a most serious nature. You will remember that the adulterous lust of Potiphar's wife was now replaced by vicious malice. She was determined to harm Joseph as much as possible by making false accusations against him. And her husband apparently believed her foul lies. Genesis 39:20 records: “And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison”. Psalm 105 says about him: “Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron”.

Joseph had suffered ill-treatment in the past, but now he had to endure something much worse – being falsely branded as someone who had tried to attack his employer's wife, but who fled when she screamed. As he lay in irons in the dungeon, there was something he would have felt much more deeply than the imprisonment itself and the physical pain associated with it. That was the shameful slur cast on his character, for he had been at pains to preserve his character before God and men. Potiphar's wife had called in the servants in his household after Joseph resisted her, and they would no doubt have repeated her lying accusation. In any case, Joseph would have had anguish of mind because that wicked woman had blackened his character, and because his profession of being a worshipper of the true God had been dishonoured.

It goes without saying that our “good name”, or reputation, is very important. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Proverbs 22:1), and “a good name is better than precious ointment” (Ecclesiastes 7:1). To get a bad name by irresponsible, foolish and wicked conduct is not only

offensive to God; it also brings shame and disgrace on ourselves and causes pain to others. Sometimes the stigma may last for many years. On the other hand, to be misrepresented, wrongly accused and slandered can be a dreadfully distressing experience, especially if one has been trying “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

Joseph suffered for doing what was right. If we have to suffer for the same reason we may expect a blessing. “It is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing” (1 Peter 3:17). Also, as a minister of long ago said, “they who suffer on such an account as this have a special opportunity afforded them of glorifying God. ‘For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.’” At such a time, when we suffer wrongfully for well doing, Satan will tempt us to resort to worldly means of clearing our name, but, as the same minister said, “*Well doing* is far more convincing than *loud speaking*”.

In his distress Joseph was *trusting in the Lord* – that is, he was waiting on the Lord to help him as He had done in the past; he was looking to the Lord to vindicate him; and he remembered the Lord’s promise about future high honour. Psalm 105 tells us that “the word of the Lord tried him” in prison, a phrase which possibly refers to God’s long delay in fulfilling His promise to Joseph. These promises of God were putting him to the test, as it were. As J A Alexander says, “Joseph’s faith in the divine promise, both to himself and his people, was severely but favourably tried”.

Those of you who are believers will be tempted sometimes to disbelieve the promises of God. When passing through a time of trouble, and waiting for God to give help and relief as He has promised, you may be dismayed because there is no sign of the promises being fulfilled. Satan will try to take advantage of you by suggesting that God has forgotten you and failed you. “Where is your God now gone?” he will ask. However, keep in mind continuously what is written about God: “He is faithful that promised” (Hebrews 10:23); and be like the Psalmist who said (in Psalm 62:5):

My soul, wait thou with patience  
upon thy God alone;  
On him dependeth all my hope  
and expectation.

Part of what God did in fulfilling His word to Joseph was to lead him, in His providence, to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh’s chief butler and chief baker. These men were royal servants with great responsibility, who had been

imprisoned for some wrongdoing. When Joseph interpreted their dreams, he was careful to attribute the interpretations to God, and thus to give glory to God. He said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God?"

We too must give glory to God as the only one who can, by His Spirit, open our understanding to understand the Scriptures. We do this when we pray sincerely, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law". Until the eyes of our understanding are opened, the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to us and we cannot know or receive them (see 1 Corinthians 2:14).

When the butler was released from prison and restored to his position, as Joseph predicted, Joseph asked him to tell Pharaoh about him. "Think on me when it shall be well with thee", Joseph said to him, "and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon" (Genesis 40:14,15). It is probable that Joseph expected the fulfilment of the word of the Lord soon after that, but the chief butler ungratefully forgot Joseph, and how sympathetic and kind Joseph had been to him. So Joseph was being led to look more than ever to the Lord Himself, and to wait for *His* time of deliverance.

May we also learn more and more to depend on the Lord, and not on men, for all that we need. The Bible states: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm", but "blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jeremiah 17:5,7).

Although Joseph had to wait a long time, he did not wait in vain. Having been in prison for several years already, he had to wait a further two long years after Pharaoh's chief butler was released from prison before he himself was set free. When the time came for the fulfilment of God's promise, not a moment longer did Joseph remain in prison.

The Christian may have to wait long for the fulfilment of a promise of the Lord, but the Lord will not fail him. Those who fear the Lord, who trust and delight in Him, will surely be vindicated, as Psalm 37 shows:

Delight thyself in God; He'll give  
thine heart's desire to thee.  
Thy way to God commit, Him trust,  
it bring to pass shall He.  
And, like unto the light, He shall  
thy righteousness display;  
And He thy judgment shall bring forth  
like noontide of the day.

## A Doctor's Bible

The man lying in a hospital bed had fallen from a high ladder and was seriously injured. In fact, he was so badly injured that the doctors could do nothing to help him except try to ease his pain. He seemed to realise that his condition was serious and asked one of the doctors how long he had still to live. As kindly as he could, the doctor gave him his opinion. Then the man replied, "I thought it would be sooner, but He knows best".

The doctor thought the man was referring to him and his medical knowledge. So he confirmed what he had just said. Then the man corrected him: "But I meant Someone else".

The doctor had been brought up in a Christian home but had wandered far away. "The older I grew," he confessed later, "the more wicked I became. I did not care in the least for the God of my mother, but rather sought to drive Him by all means out of my thoughts. I was in danger of becoming a thorough atheist, except for the voice of my conscience ever accusing and reproving me."

But the doctor knew enough to understand that the dying man acted as a Christian should. Perhaps he was specially impressed by the way the man was content to leave himself, and even the time of his death, in the hands of the great God who has control over everything – who always knows what is best. The doctor asked the man if he had any relatives who should be told about him, now that he was so seriously ill. The man shook his head.

A week later he died, and the hospital staff were looking through his few possessions. "What shall we do with this?" asked a nurse, holding up a book in her hand.

"What kind of book is it?" the doctor asked in return. "The poor man's Bible", the nurse told him. "His landlady brought it on her second visit. As long as he was able, he read it. And when he was unable to do so any more, he kept it under his bedcover."

The doctor described what happened next: "I took the Bible and – could I believe my eyes? – it was my own Bible, the Bible which my mother had given me when I left my parents' home and which later, when short of money, I had sold for a small amount. Yes, I had sold it. My name was still in it, written in my mother's own handwriting. Beneath it was the verse which she had selected for me. I stood in a dream, but I regained my self-control, managing to hide before those present my deep emotion."

He tried to pretend he had no interest in the Bible that had just been handed to him. He told the nurse: "The Book is old and has hardly any value; let me keep it and I will see about the rest".

The doctor continued his story: "I took the Bible to my room. It had been used often. Many leaves were loose, others torn; the cover also was damaged. Almost every page gave evidence that it had been read very often. Many places were underlined. And while looking through it, I read some of the precious verses. And a word I had heard in the days of my youth returned to my memory. With a deep sense of shame I looked on the precious Book. It had given comfort and refreshment to the unfortunate man in his last hours. It had been a guide to him into eternal life so that he had been able to die in peace and happiness. And this Book I had actually sold for a ridiculous price."

It seems that God blessed the Bible to the doctor's conversion. "I do not need to add much more", he said. "It is sufficient to say that the regained possession of my Bible was the cause of my conversion. The voice of my conscience could no more be silenced. I found no rest until I arose and came to Him whose hand of love I had often repulsed but who ever thought of me in pity and compassion. By God's grace I was enabled to believe that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', of whom I seemed to be one of the chief."

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*For Junior Readers*

## **"None of That Here"**

**I** am sure you sometimes find it difficult to stand up for what you believe. It is not easy to be different from the worldly children around you. Peer pressure can be very powerful and hard to resist. The wise man in Proverbs knew about this when he wrote, "The fear of man bringeth a snare". But he then goes on to give this encouragement: "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

I read recently about a Scottish boy who lived many years ago. His name was Jamie. He had set his heart on being a sailor and, at last, his mother allowed him to go to sea. But when he left home, she said to him, "Wherever you are, Jamie, whether on sea or on land, never forget to acknowledge your God. Promise me that you will kneel down every night and morning and say your prayers, no matter whether the sailors laugh at you or not." Jamie promised that he would do this and he was soon on a ship bound for India.

Jamie was faithful to his promise. He knelt down to pray before getting into his hammock. But a wicked sailor went up to him, hit him on the head and told him, "None of that here".

Poor Jamie! You can imagine how afraid he must have been. But, in the Lord's kindness, another sailor saw what happened and came to his defence.

Although he was an ungodly man himself, he was very annoyed that Jamie should have been bullied in this way. He stood up to the bully and then turned to the boy and said, “Now, Jamie, say your prayers. And if he dares to touch you, I will deal with him.”

During the rest of the voyage this sailor watched over Jamie as if he had been his father. Every night he saw that Jamie kneeled down and prayed without being disturbed. Was that not wonderful?

You should always do what you know to be right. Ask yourself, “What should I do?” not, “What will my friends think of me?” Do not be ashamed of going to church, of reading your Bible or of praying. God can help you. He is the same God who kept the three young men in Babylon from bowing down to the idol, and then saved them alive when they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. And He is the same God who gave Daniel strength to keep on praying when he was told not to, and then shut the mouths of the lions so that they could not touch him.

Remember the promise in the Bible: “Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe”. Should you not pray every day for strength and courage to “obey God rather than men”? This was what Peter and John did when the rulers “commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). May you be kept from ever being ashamed of Christ or of your religion!

*J van Kralingen*

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## The Book of Ruth

### 63. At the Feet of Christ

*Rev Keith M Watkins*

Ruth 3:13,14. “Tarry this night, . . . lie down until the morning. And she lay down at his feet until the morning.”

**R**uth came to Boaz in the middle of the night. She asked him to marry her. He agreed, provided a man who was more closely related to her late husband would not do so. So Boaz told her to wait there, lying down at his feet until the morning. This she did.

The marriage of Boaz and Ruth was designed by God to picture the union of Christ and a believer. Therefore, we might expect Ruth lying at the feet of Boaz to point to spiritual things. And so it does. For, in a spiritual way, believing sinners lie at the feet of Christ.

For Ruth to lie at the feet of Boaz meant that she was content to be *instructed* by him, like a pupil listens to his teacher. When Paul said that he grew up “at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3), he meant that Gamaliel had

been his teacher. As a foreigner, Ruth did not know the ways of Israel as well as Boaz. She did not know all the relatives in her late husband's family like he did. Lying at his feet, she waited for his instructions.

The believer is a pupil in the school of Christ. Well aware of his own ignorance, he loves to be instructed by the Saviour. Therefore he lies at Christ's feet, saying, "Never man spake like this Man" (John 7:46). Think of Mary. She "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word" (Luke 10:39). Rather than rushing around with Martha, Mary wanted to be instructed by the word of Christ. So there she was, at His feet. The believer, when he comes to his Bible or to preaching, is spiritually lying at the feet of this Great Teacher.

Lying at the feet of Boaz also showed that Ruth was *submitting* to Boaz. Now that she had asked him to marry her, she was going to do whatever he asked her. It was as if she was telling him, "Boaz, not my will, but thy will be done".

It is so with the believer and Christ. When Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he fell to the ground physically. At the same time, he began spiritually to lie at the feet of Christ, for he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Christ was now his Lord, just as Boaz was Ruth's lord. For long enough, Paul had done many things contrary to Jesus Christ, but from this time onwards, he was going to do what Christ wanted.

Remember the poor man possessed by a whole legion of demons. He was so wild that no one could tame him. Often he had been tied up, but he always broke free. But then he met Christ, and Christ cast out the devils. What a change! Now he was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35). He had become submissive – submissive to Christ, for he was at Christ's feet. Later, he wanted to follow the Saviour on His journeys, but he was told to go and tell his own people the great things the Lord had done for him. Although it was hard for him to see Christ going away, yet he obeyed. He submitted to Christ's will. Like every true Christian, he was lying at Christ's feet. By nature we are like that wild man: we will not submit to the ways of the Lord. But when we are converted, we are made willing to submit.

For Ruth to lie at the feet of Boaz that night showed that she *trusted* him. She had asked him to marry her. He said that he would do everything necessary to bring that about. And Ruth took him at his word. She rested at his feet, knowing that he would do what he promised. She did not need to worry about it any more. She could leave it entirely in his hands. He would not fail her. There was nothing more for her to do, but to wait on Boaz. He would bring it to pass.

It is like this in the gospel when sinners put their trust in the Lord Jesus

Christ. They lie at the Saviour's feet, trusting Him to accomplish their salvation. They know there is nothing they can do to earn their salvation, but they also know that Christ can do everything necessary. So, by faith, they lie down at His feet, waiting on Him. It is Christ alone who will save them, and they take Him at His word that He will do so.

This tells us something about saving faith. When Ruth was lying at the feet of Boaz, she could not be running to anyone else to help her. She realised that only Boaz could help her out of her troubles. She was looking to him alone to do it. So it is with the sinner who believes in Christ. He lies at Christ's feet, and that means he cannot be running elsewhere for salvation. He says about the work of the Lord: "This is all my salvation". He knows that there is no hope anywhere except in Christ. He is like Simon Peter, when many false disciples had departed. Would Peter and his fellow apostles also go away? Never! "Lord, to whom shall we go?" he asked, "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:58). They were lying at the feet of Christ; there was nowhere else to go. This is faith.

Ruth also showed *patience* as she lay at the feet of Boaz. No doubt she wanted to marry Boaz soon, but he told her to "tarry", or to wait. It was the middle of the night. Boaz could do nothing towards their marriage until the morning. So Ruth would have to be patient, all through the darkness of the night, waiting for dawn. Then Boaz would bring about their marriage.

So it may be with you. You might be seeking Christ. Perhaps you have been looking for a long time. It feels like a long, dark night. You are like the night watchman who longs for the first faint light of morning. But you see nothing yet. Don't give up waiting for Christ! Say with the psalmist: "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning" (Psalm 130:5,6). Those who seek will find. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian saw two men tumbling over the wall into the way. They should have entered through the wicket gate. That was the only right way to start the journey to heaven. But these two men, Formalist and Hypocrisy, thought that the gate was too far away and they preferred their short cut. Spiritually, people like them are not prepared to wait on Christ. They are not willing to seek the Holy Spirit to regenerate them. Instead they think, like Formalist, that as long as they do religious things they will be saved or, like Hypocrisy, that merely acting as a Christian will make you a Christian. Don't be like them! Be like Ruth! Lie at Christ's feet. Only He can save you.

*For Younger Readers*

## To Listen to Jesus

How good it would have been to go around with Peter and James and John and the other disciples! They could go and listen to Jesus preaching. What wonderful things Jesus used to say! As these men went about with Jesus day after day, they could hear everything He said.

Now Jesus is in heaven. We cannot go to listen to Him. We could go around all the places where He used to preach, but we would not find Him. We could go to Capernaum and to Bethsaida – places which He often visited – but we would not find Him. We could go to Jerusalem, but He would not be there any more.

You might say, “What a pity! I wish I could see Jesus and hear Him preach.”

But do you know that Jesus is still speaking to us even today, although we cannot go to hear Him?

How is that? He speaks to us through the Bible. In the Bible we find exactly the words he used when He was preaching in places like Capernaum and Bethsaida. In the Bible we find what Peter and James and John used to hear as they listened to Jesus.

One day, lots and lots of people gathered to listen to Jesus. He went up a mountain a little way, and his disciples came to Him. Then Jesus began to preach. And although none of us was there, we know what He said.

Chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus began by saying to the people: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. It is not those who think they are wonderfully good people who are blessed. That is what Jesus was telling them. It is those who know that they are sinners and who go to God for help. They know that they do not deserve to be saved, but they ask God to forgive them for Jesus' sake.

Yes, it is good to have Jesus' words in the Bible. But perhaps you are still saying, “It would be much better to hear Jesus Himself speaking to us”.

That is not so. Many of those who listened to Jesus did not believe what He said. They hated Him because of what He told them. That was very sad. The Son of God was just where they were, and He was speaking to them, but they did not like what they heard.

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You should not think that you would be any more willing to believe in Jesus than these people were. Some people did believe – people like Peter and James and John, and Mary and Martha and Lazarus in Bethany. But many did not.

You should ask God to make you willing to listen to what Jesus has said. Ask Him to make you want to listen to His words as you find them in the Bible, and to believe them.

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## Youth Conference Report 2003

It was to the Highland capital we went this year on April 8 for the annual Youth Conference. We stayed at Inverness Youth Hostel, and the list of those attending showed a total of 68 names. The host and hostess were Rev and Mrs Donald Ross; everything was proficiently organised. Margaret MacAskill was also there to help in her own competent manner. Some of the young folk came from Holland, Wales and the USA; most were from Scotland, including a few from outside the Free Presbyterian Church.

The first paper of the Conference, given by Rev David Campbell, was on *Creation*. The papers lasted 45 minutes and were followed by questions. In the evening Rev Angus Smith gave a paper on *The Fall, its Effect and Extent*. That meant the first day was taken up with doctrine, but the atmosphere was very friendly and relaxed and there were plenty of questions and answers.

We felt that these papers were useful in a day when young people are bombarded with the teachings of militant evolutionists. It struck us that it was not without reason that the Catechisms are set out in question-and-answer form. The Church needs the catechetical system, and undoubtedly all of our people would benefit spiritually if in our gatherings in homes and manses we sought discussion along such lines.

On the second day Rev D W B Somerset gave us an account of *The Life and Labours of the Apostle of the North, Rev John Macdonald, Ferintosh*. It was so interesting that we hope it will be put into writing, especially for the sake of our young folk. He happened to labour during a period in Scotland when the Holy Spirit was blessing the Word of God to the souls of men and women. His labours meant some neglect of his own congregation, but they looked forward so much to his return that he was easily forgiven. He went over to Ireland, where he preached in Gaelic after spending a little time picking up the local dialect. It was mentioned too that his melodious voice ranged up and down the musical scale to an unusual degree. This was

at one time commonplace among Highland ministers, but is much less usual nowadays. He had been a good scholar as a boy and had a comprehensive mind in dealing with the division of Scripture material. He continued to be a constant student despite his travels.

Later, Dr Somerset took us on a guided tour to illustrate *The Religious Past of the Black Isle*. We stopped at Cromarty, of Hugh Miller fame, who unfortunately was influenced to some extent by the evolutionist opinions of the age. We were surprised at the large English-speaking population during those days in Cromarty, when the whole of the surrounding area spoke Gaelic. At that time Alexander Stewart was minister in Cromarty. We were then taken to Ferintosh, to the famous burn and the hollow where thousands used to gather to listen to John Macdonald and others. We also saw the church in which he preached.

On Thursday Rev J R Tallach addressed us on *Mary the Mother of Our Lord*. It was intensely interesting and spiritual, and we felt that a good few instructive sermons were in the material. Again the questions came, and this time we felt that every one of us eagerly desired to participate in discussion of the various things involved.

Mr Ross brought all to a close, and the young folk gave a bouquet of flowers to Mrs Ross and Miss MacAskill, which we thought was entirely appropriate. We pray that the Lord, in His own wonderful way, will be pleased to bless the conference to the precious souls who were together for these few days.

*Rev Angus Smith*

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## The Value of the Bible

*J B Waterbury*

This is chapter 22 from the book, *Advice to A Young Christian*; it has been edited. It was written well over 100 years ago, when Bible reading was much more common than today. The previous chapter, in the April issue, was on the Lord's Supper.

I shall add no more on the subject of prayer and regular self-examination. You remember that I connected a careful and diligent reading of the Bible with them because it is just as important. So I shall say a little about it.

The importance of studying the Word of God is clear from the testimony of that Word and from the experience of all the eminent saints who have ever lived. The more I study it, the more deeply I am impressed with its magnificent glory, and its high importance to me as a creature accountable to God. If I was banished to a lonely rock with my Bible, I would have food for my soul and what would stimulate my understanding. I am astonished

that those who have worldly wisdom do not more often drink at this heavenly fountain. If they would once sip from this clear, pure stream, they could not fail to relish it. But only the Spirit can give such a taste.

As a piece of writing, it has charms which even unbelievers have felt obliged to acknowledge. Not long ago, prejudice shut up many highly-cultivated minds against the Bible. It was so common a book and was so often found in the hands of the poor and the uneducated that those who claimed to be learned despised it. They thus excluded themselves from the noblest source of training for the mind and the soul. A young man without religion heard one of the professors in his college refer to the beautiful comparison of our Saviour: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these". He turned to a fellow-student and asked where that striking and elegant language was found. He was astonished when he was told that it was in the Bible. "Have you never read your Bible?" his companion enquired. "My Shakespeare," said he, "is all the Bible I ever read." I admit that this is an extreme case, but there are many similar to it. Even today, how little attention is given to the Scriptures!

The wonders of the Law and the Prophecies, the simple accounts about Christ, the majestic Psalms of Israel's king and the wisdom of the wisest man who ever lived are regarded as dry and uninteresting, while the shelf groans with harmful books. I have read the poetry of Homer and Milton, but when I compare it to what David, Habakkuk and Isaiah wrote, it is just the flickering light of a taper to the flash of lightning in a thundercloud.

But this comparison might be extended to the various parts of Bible literature. Its commandments, how brief they are, and yet how full of meaning! Its histories seize on the most prominent and striking events, without including any unnecessary matter. Throughout, from Genesis to Revelation, there is an unearthly something which stamps it as a message from heaven. There is no other book on earth in which there is so accurate, so full and so clear an exhibition of human nature.

But why am I comparing the Bible as a piece of literature to someone who views this as its least attractive feature? Why have I wandered from the great point of urging you to seek a high standard of piety? Let us return and view it as the great means of sanctification. "Sanctify them through Thy truth," said our blessed Lord; "Thy Word is truth." This is the charm which so much attracts the pious heart. That heart can appreciate the elegance of scriptural style and its bold and beautiful figures of speech, but these are not the main attractions. It is the Word of God. It reveals the way of salvation. It describes

the providence of God. It presents the Lamb of God slain for our sins. It brings into view a bright and eternal reward. It speaks of the corruptions of our nature and offers the healing balm.

Briefly, the Bible contains all that a Christian can need in his pilgrimage through the world. It is his only chart through this tempestuous life. In trouble, it comforts him; in prosperity, it warns him; in difficulty, it guides him. Amid the darkness of death, and while descending into the shadowy valley, it is the day-star that illuminates his path, makes his dying eye bright with hope, and cheers his soul with the prospect of immortal glory.

Is this the book that vain and foolish minds undervalue and despise? From their folly you should learn a lesson of wisdom.

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## Looking Around Us

### One Day at a Time

Alfred Anderson is 106. At 17 he joined the Black Watch regiment and spent two years in the trenches of the First World War. His fighting days came to an end when a shell exploded overhead during the Battle of Loos. Several were killed and others, including Mr Anderson, were injured. He spent a whole day in a ditch, as bullets and mortars whistled over him, before his comrades felt it was safe to go out and rescue him.

He recovered and is now the oldest person living in Scotland. He was still fit enough to go recently to open a new display at the renovated museum at the Black Watch headquarters in Perth. "We lived for each day during the war," he said. "At 106, I do much the same again."

In the trenches, death was near. Soldiers were being killed all the time, sometimes large numbers of them. No one could be sure of living another day. Clearly that is how Mr Anderson felt then. And now that he is old, that is how he feels today. But it is how we should all feel. We should recognise that we may not have long to live. In fact, none of us really have very long to live, and we should act accordingly.

As sinners we need to be forgiven; we need new hearts. But there is salvation in Christ, for He died for sinners. We should remember the words: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6). Let us seek Him today – not tomorrow or some time in the indefinite future. It is only those who follow Christ who live a really worthwhile life.

## Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2002-03

### Names for Exercise 2

**Senior Section:** *Auckland:* Evan, Sergei and Yulia Whetton. *Blunsdon Hill:* Jo and Sarah Woodhams. *Bracadale:* Andrew and Johan Campbell. *Chesley:* Everdena and Rebecca Kuiper. *Cranbrook:* Corinne Bailey. *Dunedin:* Warwick Worth. *Farr:* Andrea MacQueen. *Fort William:* Johanna MacKinnon. *Glasgow:* Jacqueline Freeke. *Grafton:* Stephen Kidd, Andrea van Dorp. *Halkirk:* Andrew Sutton, Cherith Sutton. *Inverness:* Christine Boyd, Ben Fiddes, Joanne Murray, Alexander Schouten. *Kyle:* Caren and Joanne Whear. *London:* Anna Rowland. *Matfield:* Adrienne Woodhams. *North Uist:* Margaret Macdonald, Ryan Macdonald. *Sengera:* George Birundu, Jayne Magoma, Pamellah Maranga, Zablou Marube, James Matara, Alice Mbaka, Andrew and Mishael Mosiria, Justus Mosoti, Vincent Mouti, Moses Nyanchongi, Lucas Nyandwaro, Elizabeth Oganda, Esther Ongori, Francis Oyaro. *South Harris:* Iain MacLean. *Sydney:* Iain and Jennifer Marshall. *Vatten:* Ruth Fleming. *Wellington:* Esther and Naomi Hicklin.

**Intermediate Section:** *Auckland:* Kirsten McCrae, Susan Thomas, Anya Whetton. *Bracadale:* James Campbell. *Chesley:* Margaret Kuiper, Randy Winkels. *Dingwall:* Joanna Mackenzie, Neil MacLean. *Dunedin:* Hayley Worth. *Gisborne:* Mark and Stephen Geuze. *Grafton:* David and Susanna Kidd, Cassandra van Dorp, Emma and Natalie White. *Farr:* Ruth MacQueen. *Fort William:* William S Mackinnon. *Glasgow:* Marion MacLeod. *Guildford:* Joanna Risbridger. *Inverness:* Chloe W E Fiddes, Hanna J Schouten. *Kyle:* Paul Whear. *London:* Lydia Martin, James and Rebecca Munns, Naomi Rowland, Josie van Kralingen. *North Carolina:* Lisa and Lori Baldwin. *North Uist:* Rhoda Cameron, John A Macdonald, Kathleen Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alexander Bailey. *Portree:* Rachel MacCuish, Finlay MacRaid. *Sengera:* Ondieki Linet, Bernard Onwonga, Ednah Paul. *Scaynes Hill:* Sam Main. *South Harris:* Donald N Morrison, Stewart MacLean. *Stornoway:* Kimberly Ferguson, Angus D Macleod. *Swordale:* Sara Macleod. *Sydney:* Laura Marshall. *Wellington:* Thomas Hicklin. *Westerham:* Edward Hanks.

**Junior Section:** *Auckland:* David Thomas. *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca and Sandy Campbell. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Chesley:* David Kuiper, Martha Bouman. *Dingwall:* Beverly and Kathryn Mackenzie. *Dunoon:* Esther Maley. *Farr:* Caitlin R MacQueen. *Gairloch:* James McBride. *Gisborne:* Anita Geuze. *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke, Kenneth C Gillies, Donald MacLeod. *Grafton:* Shelley van Dorp. *Guildford:* Matthew Risbridger. *Highworth:* Becki Woodhams. *Holland:* Anne and Peter Bakker. *Inverness:* Esther and James Boyd, Mark Campbell, Lois H Fiddes, James Fraser, Aonghas Murray, Jonathan Schouten. *Larne:* Philip Acton. *Lochcarron:* Jonathon Stewart. *London:* Abbie Martin, Elizabeth Munns, David Rowland, Alexander Turnbull, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *North Harris:* Cailean, Eilidh J and Sara McCombe. *North Carolina:* Lydia Baldwin. *North Tolsta:* Chrisann MacLeod. *North Uist:* John Cameron, Flora M Macdonald, Kerri Macinnes. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail and Martha Main. *Sengera:* Joan Abel, Carolyne Omony. *Stornoway:* Anne Dickie, Karina Ferguson. *Stratherrick:* David Fraser. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod. *Sydney:* Alison Marshall, Madison van Praag. *Tomatin:* Lois Cameron-Mackintosh. *Ullapool:* Siobhan MacCulloch, Susannah C Mackenzie. *Wellington:* Joanna Hicklin.

### Youth Conference CDs

CDs of the papers given at the 2003 Youth Conference are now available at £6, for complete sets only, including postage anywhere. Details of papers are given in the report on page 115. (The recording of the first paper is of poorer quality than the others.) Please send payment with your order, which should arrive before September 1. Cheques should be made payable to James W Macleod. His address is F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA.

### A group of Youth Conference members

**Upper Primary Section:** *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Chesley:* Jenny Bouman, Rachel Winkels, Audrey Zekveld. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie, Sarah M MacLean. *Dunedin:* Richie Worth. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Jonathan MacDonald. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Fort William:* Rachel M Mackinnon. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* William Geuze, Louise van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Catherine Freeke, Hugh Gillies, Neil Gillies. *Grafton:* Jennifer Kidd, Matthew White. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Natalie Macaskill, Catherine Schouten. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *Larne:* Deborah Acton, Alison Sharp. *London:* William Munns, Constance and Rupert Turnbull. *North Tolsta:* Don Neil and Mark Mackenzie, Sean MacLeod. *North Uist:* Alastair and Christina Macdonald, Laura Macinnes. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *Sengera:* Lillian and Peter Kamanda, Dolfine Moses, Milcah Paul. *Shieldaig:* Jennifer Goldby. *Stornoway:* Alasdair G Gillies. *Stratherrick:* John Fraser, Roma MacRae. *Sydney:* Andrew Marshall. *Ullapool:* Stuart McCulloch. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming. *Wellington:* Elizabeth and Rebekah Hicklin.

**Lower Primary Section:** *Auckland:* Amy Thomas. *Barnoldswick:* David Martin, Rebecca and Robert Ross. *Chesley:* Jacob Zekveld. *Dingwall:* Alasdair MacLean, Andrew and Graham MacLeod, Ruth Macleod. *Dunedin:* Gresham Worth. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Daniel and Isla Macdonald. *Farr:* Finlay and Muriel MacRae-Cramp. *Fortrose:* Jerusha and Sarah Nixon. *Gairloch:* Rebecca McBride, Donald and Rachel Mackenzie, Catherine and Mairi Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Alexander, Emma and Kirsten van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Ewen and Fiona Beaton, Donna Chisholm, Ian Gillies, Iona Gillies, Kate Gillies, Rachel and Ruairidh Macleod, Callum and Peter Macpherson. *Grafton:* Bethany McAlpine, Chloe van Dorp, Cameron White. *Inverness:* Jonathan Fiddes, Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton, Peter Schouten. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *Larne:* Cameron and Renwick Sharp. *Lochcarron:* Malcolm Stewart. *London:* Claudia, Edward and Oliver Martin, Andrew and Edward Munns, Benjamin, David and Rachele Strata, Jemima, Jeremy, Joseph and Lucy Turnbull, Amy van Kralingen. *North Tolsta:* Sheena Mackenzie. *North Uist:* Iain Boyd, Margaret Cameron, Fraser MacDonald, John A Macdonald. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Salisbury:* Jill Buchanan. *Sengera:* Betty Bochere, Evans Mekenye, Judith Moses, Salome Onteri. *South Harris:* Catherine Macleod. *Stornoway:* Leah Beaton, Cirsty and Sarah Gillies, Lauren Macdonald, Andrew MacQuarrie. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Uig:* Murdo George Mackay. *Sydney:* James and Keith Marshall, Heather and Zoe van Praag. *Ullapool:* Lewis Mackenzie. *Wellington:* Abigail and Lydia Hicklin.