

# The Young People's Magazine

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## Never Long Enough?

On a gravestone in the Bedfordshire town of Olney are inscribed words which tell passers-by that, no matter how long they live, it is never long enough. Which is no doubt very true for many people. They have ambitions – to be rich, to be famous, to explore the world, to experience all the pleasures of this life, or whatever. Yet, however long they live and however much they have experienced of these things, they are still not satisfied. They still have an empty heart, a heart that nothing can really satisfy no matter how much they actually get of what they want.

Yet, on the other hand, there are some people who, solemnly, feel that they have seen too much of life, and they want to get out of it at once. They too have an empty heart which nothing can satisfy, but they see no possibility of ever getting satisfaction of any kind, no matter how long they live. The situations that some people find themselves in are truly heart-rending, but that can never be any excuse for suicide. No human being has the right to decide when to die. There is, Solomon tells us, “a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:2) – a time appointed by God Himself for every human being to leave this world. And, whatever our circumstances, we may safely leave it with the Most High to decide when our life should come to an end.

It is, of course, a generation which is determined to forget God and His authority that sees so many people bringing their own lives to an end. For anyone to cast themselves into eternity is dreadfully solemn. But no one who has heard the gospel of salvation through a crucified Saviour has any reason to despair. However difficult their situation, let them flee at once to Him who still says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Then they will find real meaning in life, and true satisfaction. And, as they become willing to leave it to God to order the time of their death, they may say, as Job once did: “All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come”.

So often too, especially if it is an old person who dies – or someone suffering badly – people say that it was better for them to go. Well, if they were God's children, there is no doubt that to be with Christ in heaven is far

better. But it is altogether thoughtless to speak like that if the person was not converted. How awful to pass into a lost eternity, however difficult their condition may have been in this world, if they were not ready to meet their Maker – if their sins were not forgiven!

But how ought we to spend our time in this world? What are our lives for? First of all, they are an opportunity to prepare for eternity. They are an opportunity to seek forgiveness for our sins – and holy hearts – so that we may be fit to enter heaven when we leave this world. Yet, if we try to earn salvation by our own good deeds, no life will ever be long enough. The fact is that nothing that we do is free from sin; so nothing that we do can possibly please God. It is impossible for us to earn our salvation, no matter how long we live. And we should always bear in mind how short our lives will be at the longest. We dare not presume that death is far away. So we have no time to waste if we are to be ready to pass into eternity at a moment's notice, for we may get no warning that death is near. In any case, God makes clear that   
is the appointed time for us to seek salvation. It is the time that   
has appointed, and who are we to argue that some other time is better, just because it seems more convenient to us?

Our lives are also an opportunity to serve God and to do good to others. At the longest, we do not have much time to be useful. We can only do what is really good if our hearts are right. Yes, unconverted people may do what is helpful to others but they cannot do anything that is pleasing to God. Everything they do, however kind or even self-sacrificing it is, leaves God and His glory out of the picture. And so it is polluted by sin.

How important then it is to have holy hearts, so that we would begin to glorify God in this world! Then we might hope to be used to some extent in the progress of the cause of Christ. Even if we were only showing others a godly example – so that they could see that we were not following them into sin – we would be doing what is glorifying to God. Our lives would then be worthwhile, however short they might be. But however long they may be, let us always remember that we only have a very limited time to serve God in this world, and a very limited time to do real good to others. Let us then be earnest in seeking salvation with a real sense of urgency. And let God's children seek grace to be truly useful throughout the short time they will spend in this world.

The parish church in Olney can be seen from miles around with its tall spire tapering up towards the sky. At one time those who gathered for public worship in that massive building listened to the sermons of a truly godly minister, John Newton. Everyone knows him as the writer of   
, but very few understand what grace is, or that it is in any way amazing. But

it was indeed the amazing grace of God that changed John Newton from a depraved slave trader into a humble and highly-useful Christian.

He once wrote about arriving back in Britain from a very difficult voyage. His ship was battered so badly by the wind and waves that it was almost destroyed; the water which flowed in from at least one serious leak ruined most of their provisions, and they almost starved. But Newton recorded: "I began to know that there is a God who hears and answers prayer". By God's grace he had found salvation for his soul. Others of the crew were lost at sea, but Newton's life was spared. God's time had not come for him to die. Newton had a work to do in the kingdom of God – particularly as a preacher both in Olney and, later, in London. But another way in which he was very useful was writing a large number of spiritual letters to people in various parts of the country; these letters are still valuable today because they are full of sensible, scriptural advice. ( is available in paperback, and older readers would find this selection useful.)

When Newton was getting old and his powers were waning, someone suggested to him that it was time to stop preaching. "What!" he exclaimed. "And shall the old African blasphemer stop while he can speak?" He was not happy at the thought of giving up while there was any possibility of doing some good to souls. And, though we should be careful about going on with what we are no longer able to do properly, this showed Newton's gracious outlook on life.

A few years before he died, he wrote in his will: "I commit my soul to my gracious God and Saviour, who mercifully spared and preserved me when I was an apostate [someone who has given up his religion], a blasphemer and an infidel, and delivered me from the state of misery on the coast of Africa into which my obstinate wickedness had plunged me, and who has been pleased to admit me (though most unworthy) to preach His glorious gospel. I rely with humble confidence upon the atonement and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, which I have often proposed to others as the only foundation whereon a sinner can build his hope, trusting that He will guard and guide me through the uncertain remainder of my life and that He will then admit me into His presence in His heavenly kingdom."

Here was a man who could commit his life, and the end of his life, into God's hand. He had already committed himself, body and soul, into God's care – for time and for eternity – when he first believed. And now, though God must before long bring his life in this world to an end, he knew that he would then have lived long enough. He would have finished the work that God had purposed that he would do, and he was ready to go. Surely that is what really matters for us all!

## The Role of Women in Society

### 3. Women in the Church

This is the third part of a paper given at the 2004 Youth Conference. The first two parts have examined the general teaching of the Bible on the matter. Readers should note that, while all the authors quoted have written useful material on this subject, they may not be reliable on other matters.

To what extent and in what circumstances is the woman to be subject to the man? In the worship and work of the Church of Christ, certainly. This is clear from such verses as: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34,35). The teaching of 1 Timothy 2:11,12 is similar; the verses read: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

Such verses debar women from exercising spiritual rule in the Church. It is completely contrary to the will of God that women should be office-bearers, whether as ministers, elders or deacons. The office of preacher is one of leadership and authority, and for a women to preach and teach in public worship, or to moderate the proceedings of Church courts, is decidedly to usurp authority over the man in the life of the Church.

Matthew Henry, in commenting on 1 Corinthians 14:34,35, says that women were not to teach, "nor so much as to debate and ask questions in the church, but learn in silence there; and, if difficulties occurred, ask their own husbands at home". "No rule in the New Testament is more positive than this", says Albert Barnes, "and however plausible . . . the reasons which may be urged for disregarding it, and for allowing women to take part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the apostle Paul is positive, and his meaning cannot be mistaken."

In commenting on the words in 1 Timothy 2:11,12, John Calvin says, "Not that this prohibition takes from them the charge of instructing their family, but only excludes them from the office of teaching, which God has committed to men only. . . . If anyone bring forward, by way of objection, Deborah (Judges 4:4) and others of the same class, of whom we read that they were at one time appointed by the command of God to govern the people, the answer is easy. Extraordinary acts done by God do not overturn the ordinary rules of [Church] government, by which He intended that we

should be bound. Accordingly, if women at one time held the office of prophets and teachers, and that too when they were supernaturally called to it by the Spirit of God, He who is above all law might do this. But, being a peculiar case, this is not opposed to the constant and ordinary system of government [in the Church].”

This leads us to ask, What place and role do women really have in the life of the Church? While they cannot hold office in the Church, there is much that they can do, for which they are ideally suited. We all know how, when Jesus Christ went about preaching the gospel and healing the sick, He was helped by women – they “ministered unto Him of their substance” (Luke 8:3).

The Apostle Paul commends several women for the help they gave to the Church. He told the Christians in Rome: “I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also” (Romans 16:1,2). To a certain Philippian believer he wrote, “I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel” (Philippians 4:3). There was also Priscilla, who along with her husband Aquila, instructed Apollos privately “and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26); Paul greeted them as his “helpers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3).

How did these godly women in Philippi and other places actually labour with Paul in the work of the gospel? Most reliable commentators agree that they did not, of course, preach, but rather that they supported Paul and his fellow ministers by professing the gospel, bearing reproach and persecution for it, furthering the spread of it with their worldly possessions, entertaining the ministers of the gospel, visiting the sick, and instructing and exhorting other women and children in their homes. Lydia, the first convert at Philippi, rendered useful service at the very outset by giving hospitality to the Apostle and his companions. One writer thinks that “Euodia and Syntyche were doubtless two of the women who resorted to the riverside, ‘where prayer was wont to be made’ (Acts 16:13), and being early converted, would naturally take an active part in teaching other women called at a later period”.

Another responsibility of Christian women today, especially those of more mature years and Christian experience, is to give guidance to younger people. Ministers of the gospel in the past valued the wise advice which older gracious women gave to younger women in their congregations about how to conduct themselves in the house of God and in their Christian profession, how to cope in a Christian manner with the responsibilities of being a wife and mother, and even about such matters as dress (1 Timothy

2:9,10; 1 Peter 3:3,4). They also valued the godly example these women showed to those who were younger. Older godly women, as Titus 2:3-5 informs us, are to be “teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”.

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## **James Kidd of Aberdeen**

### **2. Professor and Preacher 1794-1801**

This is another part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. In the first part we followed Kidd from his birth in Northern Ireland, where he became a teacher, to America. From there he came to Edinburgh to study for the ministry.

**I**n 1794 James Kidd became Professor of Oriental Languages in Marischal College, Aberdeen. He stayed there until his death 40 years later, teaching mainly, if not entirely, Hebrew. His time in Aberdeen was a period of rapid social and scientific change. In 1794, for instance, there was only one horse-drawn coach a week from Aberdeen to Edinburgh. It left on Monday morning at 4 o'clock and arrived at dinner-time on Tuesday. News travelled slowly in such circumstances; when the British Prime Minister was assassinated in 1809, it took over a month for the information to reach some parts of the country. By the 1820s, however, one could board a steamship in Aberdeen in the morning and be in Edinburgh in the evening; and by 1848 the journey had been reduced to just a few hours by train. The population of Aberdeen grew rapidly in this time, from 13 000 in 1801 to 63 000 in 1841.

At the end of the eighteenth century Aberdeen, like most of Scotland, was spiritually in the hands of the anti-evangelical Moderate ministers. Fifty years earlier, Aberdeen had shared in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that brought about the Cambuslang and Kilsyth revivals, but the effects of this had worn off by the time of Kidd's arrival, and deadness prevailed. Family worship was seldom heard, and one prominent minister declared that he regarded prayer meetings as nothing but “nurseries for spiritual pride”. Only in a few small Independent and Secession congregations was there a gospel ministry.

The salary of the Professor of Oriental Languages in Aberdeen was small, but the position gave James Kidd considerable status in the city, which proved to be useful later on in his conflicts with the Moderates. To start with, his circumstances were rather odd. On the one hand he was a professor

teaching the divinity students, but on the other hand from 1794 to 1796 he himself was also a divinity student studying under the other professors. On one occasion, he was required as a student to produce notes of a sermon, and he “brought in a sheaf of loose papers, disjointed and crude”. Dr Campbell, Principal of Marischal College and Professor of Divinity, said to him: “Now, Mr Kidd, it would ill become me to criticise severely the production of a gentleman holding the position of a colleague. I would just advise you, when you next come up with a discourse, to have it arranged a little more methodically.”

James Kidd finished his divinity studies at the beginning of 1796 and was licensed to preach the gospel on February 3. On Sabbath, February 28, he preached his first sermon, in the parish church of Kinellar just outside Aberdeen. He took Isaiah 45:22 as his text: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else”. He recorded in his diary that the congregation was larger than usual, as there was no sermon in some of the neighbouring parish churches. “Although I had not such a frame of mind as I could have wished all the morning,” he went on, “yet, when I began to preach, I found myself much revived by the attention of the audience, but whether their attention was due to the novelty of the preacher, or was the effect of the sermon, I cannot say. But I felt myself to be more impressive towards the close of the discourse, when I began to commend Christ.”

These last words, \_\_\_\_\_, contain the key to his ministry. He was naturally an eloquent and powerful speaker, but it was the “commending” of Christ that the city of Aberdeen so urgently needed at that time. And generally it is those ministers who have been the most faithful in commending Christ who have seen the greatest blessing upon their labours. Kidd lived to see Aberdeen transformed by the gospel; yet it was not his own character and eloquence which brought this about, but the Holy Spirit blessing the preaching of “Christ crucified”.

The next Sabbath he preached at Trinity Chapel, where he was to be the “evening lecturer” for the next five years. The \_\_\_\_\_ which he was expected to deliver was an address explaining the meaning of a longer passage of Scripture, while a sermon was based on a shorter text and had more exhortation and practical application. “On Sabbath, March 6,” he notes, “I delivered a lecture on Isaiah 35. But, ah, what a lack of utterance! Never did I see how little man could do in explaining Scripture as I did this day. I felt the most severe distress, and was several times ready to stop. I was so much awed by the audience that I could not look up the whole time of the service. I was so much overcome that I grew quite sick and nearly fainted.

Never shall I forget the distress of mind I laboured under." He adds: "I preached on the afternoon of the same day on Isaiah 45:22, the same sermon I had delivered at Kinellar. The Lord was gracious in giving me more assistance than in the morning."

Some more extracts from the diary which he kept at this period of his life will give a clear idea of his godliness and spiritual-mindedness, and they will also show some of the difficulties which preachers of the gospel face.

Sabbath, 10 April 1796: "I failed in this service most in my prayers, which smote me to the heart. It is a bad symptom of a preacher who cannot address the Lord with fervent and suitable prayer."

Sabbath, 1 May 1796: "I have great reason to bless God that I was considerably helped and found much freedom in applying the subject. What account shall I render at the last day for this day's labours? Merciful God, give me more of the spirit and temper of Jesus Christ my Lord, and let Thy glory be my chief aim, for His sake, Amen."

Sabbath, 12 June 1796: "I delivered a lecture on Psalm 19. I do not remember ever to have had more freedom of utterance. The Holy Spirit graciously assisted me before I went to the church. Just whilst kneeling down to pray for direction, a thought struck me all at once to turn all the views of my explanation towards Christ, which I did, and O how sweetly I was enabled to show the sufficiency of revelation, in all its parts. O to lead men to the blessed Jesus!"

Saturday, 16 July 1796, Evening: "I have been at work since Tuesday preparing two discourses, a sermon and a lecture. I begin to see religious things in a very different light from what I ever did before. I see plainly that the Holy Ghost is the only teacher of divinity that can profit a preacher of the gospel. I feel great needs, but am willing to wait with patience till I am further enlightened. May God grant this very soon, for Christ's sake."

Sabbath, 18 December 1796: "O if the Lord will bless what I have said, how happy I should be. I know and believe that He can work by any means and instrument; but O if I do not share in the salvation which I preach! O if I do not know that Saviour whom I recommend, what shall I do? My God, I desire to give myself to Thy service in the Church. Accept of me, a poor, unworthy and guilty sinner, and apply the blood of Jesus to my conscience. Grant me Thy blessing and bless the labours of this evening to my soul and to all who heard the Word, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen, Amen."

Saturday, 21 January, 1797: "I have great reason to bless the Lord for such peace of mind as I have enjoyed this week, and I have also particular reason to bless the Lord for one sweet glimpse of the Lord Jesus my Saviour. This mercy was granted to me last Thursday evening between four and five



o'clock, and what an overpowering sensation it was! What a soul-comforting glance of redeeming love! O for another return [of the Holy Spirit ] to my poor soul! Grant me this, blessed Lord, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake."

Sabbath, 9 April 1797: Kidd complained that the way he delivered his sermon "was strained and broken. I laboured under great absence of spiritual assistance. Alas, alas, such a poor, sinful, pithless preacher as I am! I much fear many of the poor hearers were very little benefited."

Sabbath, 28 May, 1797: "All this day I have had sweet impressions of the sufficiency of Christ. His fulness, His power, His mercy and His love seem so delightful and comforting that I think I could, and do, give myself wholly to Him . . . . I view my weakness, my ignorance, my sinfulness and my unworthiness in everything. Yet, as He invites me to come to Him, and He promises me rest, I most heartily come to Him to be made all things to me. To Thee I come for Thy blessed rest, blessed Jesus. Be it so. Amen."

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## The Open Bible

The Bible is very straightforward when it describes God's thoughts about man. In Genesis 6:5 we read: "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually". David's confession in Psalm 51 speaks particularly to those who think that babies and children are innocent, sinless creatures: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me". From the womb we go astray and, unless the Holy Spirit changes our hearts, we shall go to everlasting punishment.

Waldeir lived in Anápolis, a city in central Brazil. Like everybody else, he was a sinner in the sight of God. But he did not believe that he was bad enough to deserve to be punished in hell. After all, he thought, I am not as bad as the robbers and murderers you hear about. One day, one of his friends invited him to go to church. There he heard that he was a sinner and that he needed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross so that sinners would have their sins pardoned and enjoy peace with God. That sermon made a big impression on him, and he started to think about the seriousness of dying without having his sins forgiven.

After a while he seemed a changed man. He started to attend church regularly and professed faith in the Lord Jesus. But this new way of life only lasted for a short while. First, he started to stay away from church on Sabbath; then he went back to his old life of sin; in the end he left his wife and daughters and started to lead a life that saddened all who loved him. His wife

and his other Christian friends continued to commit him to the Lord. They pleaded the Lord's promises, that all things are possible with Him, and they prayed that it would please the Lord to change Waldeir.

After many months he started to attend church again, both the morning and evening services on Sabbath and the mid-week prayer meeting. He would now bring a small notebook with him to write down some of what he heard and he would ask questions about what he did not understand. Apparently he had such a thirst for the Word of God that he was always reading it and asking his minister and elders about the verses he could not understand. The Lord provided him with a night-time job as a security guard on a building site, and he sat all night studying his Bible.

He now realized the hurt he had caused his wife and daughters, so he went and asked his wife to take him back. However, because he had once before gone back to the world, the brethren in the church were a little cautious of him and they advised his wife to be very careful. His wife, a godly lady who trusted in the promises of God, committed the matter to Him. When Waldeir came back home and all was well, everyone was very happy, especially his wife and daughters.

A week after he had returned home, when the workmen arrived at the construction site one morning, they found Waldeir sitting down, reading as usual. As they approached him, he looked very pale and lifeless. They then realized that he was dead! He had suffered a heart attack and passed away in the middle of the night. When he was called to his eternal home, he had been reading the Bible. It was open at 2 Samuel 12, which contains the assurance: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin". Next to him was his little notebook, where he had made some notes about the chapter he was reading.

Waldeir was now in glory, where he would no longer need his Bible or his notebook, for his knowledge both of God and of His Word was now perfect. Paul contrasts this life with the next: "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

When I was told this story, I blessed the Lord for His faithfulness towards His children. Does His Word not assure us that He will keep His children safely and that no one will snatch them out of His mighty hand? I also thought about the most solemn moment of our lives, when we are ushered into the presence of God. When the Lord called Waldeir, he was engaged in the most worthwhile activity in this world – reading and meditating on the Word of God.

We all have our responsibilities in this world, but let us make sure that we are ready to die – ready to be called into the presence of our Creator. Let us

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not trifle with the Lord; in His kindness He gives us times of relaxation from the demands of this earthly life, but let us use our time well. Let us take heed to Christ's words of counsel: "Watch and pray". Let us be ready, for we do not know the hour when we will be called out of this world.

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## Thirst

I am sure you know what it feels like to be thirsty sometimes. Perhaps on a hot summer afternoon, after playing outside you came in desperate for a drink. You quickly swallowed a glass of cold water or juice and you soon felt better.

But you have probably never experienced the fearful heat and thirst which people have to endure who get lost in the desert. With air temperatures of well over 40°C, baking sand and no shelter, no one can survive very long without water.

Can you think of someone in the Bible who nearly died of thirst? Do you remember the story of Hagar and her son Ishmael? When Abraham sent them away from his home, they wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When their water bottle was empty and there was nothing more to drink, Hagar was afraid the boy would die; so she laid him down in the shelter of some shrubs. But the Lord had mercy on them and made Hagar see a well where she was able to fill their water bottle. Then she gave Ishmael a drink from it, and so his life was saved.

Now think about this world in which we live. Is it not like a desert spiritually? Our souls will die eternally if we do not receive life-giving water. So where can you go to obtain this soul-reviving drink? The wise man in Proverbs tells us: "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country".

Do you know another word that means the same as \_\_\_\_\_? The word \_\_\_\_\_ means good news, doesn't it? So if you turn to the Gospels you will find the good news about Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour. What does He say of Himself? "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." He can provide a life-giving drink in the gospel, which will save your soul.

But do not be tempted to try out the waters of this world. You may think that they will satisfy you, but they will not. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst".

What do you have to pay for this drink? Nothing at all. It is free. That is

why we are told: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). Do not try to offer your own works as payment to God for salvation. They are the filthy rags of your self-righteousness. No, come with empty hands pleading for mercy, seeking for a drink of this priceless, thirst-quenching, soul-reviving water.

This gospel drink is offered so freely, so fully, so mercifully to sinners like us – right up to the very end of the Bible. Even in the last chapter of Revelation, we are told: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Will you not come then? There is no excuse for you to die of thirst when you have been offered this gospel drink time and again. Even if you do not think you are thirsty, pray to be given a spiritual thirst. Ask God to give you the desires the Psalmist had when he wrote, in Psalm 42:

"Like as the heart for water-brooks in thirst doth pant and bray;  
So pants my longing soul, O God, that come to Thee I may.  
My soul for God, the living God, doth thirst: when shall I near  
Unto they countenance approach, and in God's sight appear."

Then you will be truly satisfied, as Psalm 36 describes:

"They with the fatness of thy house shall be well satisfied;  
From rivers of thy pleasure thou wilt drink to them provide."

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## God Did not Forget

**D**id you read last month about Joseph and how God was always with him, even in prison? Perhaps you wondered how Joseph was allowed out of prison.

One of the other prisoners was a baker. Another was a butler. Before he was put in prison, he brought cups of wine to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

One night both of these men had a dream. In the morning, Joseph saw that they looked very sad. The baker and the butler were thinking about their dreams. They knew that their dreams had a meaning, but they did not know anyone who could tell them what the meaning was.

Joseph told them that only God knew what the dreams meant. And he asked the men to tell him their dreams.

They did so. Then God helped Joseph to explain to them what the dreams meant. Joseph wasn't himself able to explain the dreams, but God could show him what they meant. So Joseph told the butler that, in three days, Pharaoh would set him free. The butler must have been very happy.

This is just what happened. The third day after that was Pharaoh's birthday, and he let the butler go out of prison. Once more, he brought cups of wine to Pharaoh.

When Joseph showed the butler what his dream meant, Joseph asked him to tell Pharaoh about him. Joseph hoped that, when Pharaoh would hear his story, he would let him go free.

But did the butler remember? No, he forgot all about Joseph. How disappointed Joseph must have been!

Yet God did not forget Joseph. One night Pharaoh had two dreams he could not understand. And no one else could tell him what they meant.

Then the butler remembered Joseph. He said to Pharaoh: "I do remember my faults this day". And then he told Pharaoh about Joseph. At once Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he explained to Pharaoh what the dreams meant. Of course Joseph did not have to go back to the prison. He was now a free man.

But are you sometimes like the butler? Perhaps you are asked to do something, and you really mean to do it. But then you forget. How selfish! Just like the butler was selfish! He got free, and poor Joseph was left in prison. It was good that God was still with Joseph when he had to stay in prison! It was good that God did not forget him! God never forgets His promises.

Do not be like the selfish butler. Try to remember to do what will help other people, especially if you make a promise to them.

### **Youth Conference CDs**

CDs of the five papers given at the 2004 Youth Conference are now available from the Free Presbyterian Bookroom. They cost £6, for complete sets only, postage extra. Details of the papers are given in the report which begins on the next page.

## Youth Conference Report – 2004

This year's Youth Conference was held in Aberdeen in early April, when 72 young people attended. This was more than in past years, and some of them came from as far away as Holland. We were in a comfortable hall of residence and had excellent meals. In conversation, the young people said they found the conference helpful, and they hope, God willing, to return next year. The five papers generated a lot of useful discussion.

The first paper, on "The Role of Women in Society", was given by Rev N M Ross. The first part highlighted the Word of God as the source of our principles. The anti-biblical views of feminism were exposed, which claims to liberate women from men, marriage, motherhood and housekeeping. While not as influential as it was, feminism continues to have harmful effects.

In the Church, women cannot be ministers, elders or deacons, but Mr Ross pointed to many ways in which they can contribute to the work of spreading the gospel. He then discussed the role of women in the home. The man is the head of the family, but the married woman has great responsibilities as a wife and a mother. "The whole drift of Scripture passages about family life is that the wife and mother ordinarily devotes herself to her husband, children and home." Finally, the role of women in the workplace was considered.

Rev David Campbell gave the second paper, on Eastern Europe. We were first given a brief history of the religious and political scene there. Most of Eastern Europe was not blessed with the influence of the Reformation, and where it did have some influence, it did not prosper, due to the effect of error and the power of the Roman Catholic Church. The Eastern Orthodox Churches, which separated from the Church of Rome some hundreds of years before the Reformation, have the largest following. Much of their worship is unbiblical, with much idolatry, while in the matter of salvation there is great dependence on human merit.

For a time, part of Eastern Europe was under the power of Islam. More recently, Communism held sway. With its atheistic outlook and persecuting policy, it attacked all kinds of religion and sought to take complete control of the churches. Arminian doctrine has had great influence in independent churches, but many of them stood out against the power and idolatry of the Orthodox Church and against Communist oppression. When that system fell, a vast field of gospel labour opened up to churches in the West. Missionaries flooded into Eastern Europe but with them came a great deal of confusion.

As a Church, we were visiting Eastern Europe before Communism fell

and now, in God's providence, we have a congregation in Odessa, in the Ukraine. From this centre, the work of distributing Bibles and sound books is going on. As yet, there is undoubtedly an open door for the gospel in the Ukraine and we hope that our work there will expand.

Rev H M Cartwright spoke on the Providence of God. The Lord has not abandoned His creation, but is personally and actively sustaining, controlling and directing the affairs of this world so as to bring about His eternal purposes. These purposes are sure to be fulfilled, and one great aim of them is the salvation of His people. Providence covers even the smallest details of what happens and takes to do with both good and bad deeds. It operates through the laws of nature, while God could act outside these laws should He so wish.

Mr Cartwright referred to some problems connected with the doctrine of Providence, such as the evil and suffering in the world, and the fact that the wicked sometimes prosper while the Lord's people are plagued and chastened. There is also the question: What room can there be for freedom of choice if God determines everything from the beginning. Some put forward unscriptural answers to these difficulties. However, while God foreordains all the actions of men, they do what they do freely. So the action is truly theirs, whether good or bad. Yet God cannot be the author of sin, and there we ought to rest. Ultimately the solution is faith's confidence in God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible.

How do we apply the doctrine of Providence in our personal lives? We must note God's providence as well as His Word; His providence never works against His Word. Indeed, should it seem like that to us, we must consider first what the Word of God is directing us to do. As God is the God of providence, we should direct our prayer to Him.

Rev D W B Somerset led us on a historical tour of Dunnottar Castle, perched on a rock high above the seashore about 12 miles south of Aberdeen. Its main interest for us was that some of the Covenanters were imprisoned there for 11 weeks in 1685 because they wanted to keep to the principles of the Bible. These 122 men and 45 women had to endure grim, cruel conditions in the Whigs' Vault; they were the worst treated of any large number of prisoners in British history. It was little wonder to us that some of them died, as our party took up most of the space in the vault and we numbered only about 80. Two-thirds of the prisoners were sent as slaves to America. "Two of these, John Fraser and Jean Moffat, married in America," Dr Somerset told us, "and returned to Scotland after 1689. John Fraser became minister of Alness. Their son James was also minister of Alness and was the author of a well-known book on ."

Dr Somerset also told us about James Kidd (1761-1834). He was a professor of Hebrew in Aberdeen and was also a noted minister of the gospel. He came from very humble beginnings in Ireland, but was blessed with a godly mother who brought him up in the fear of God. He had a congregation of 2000, one of the largest in Scotland. He had great influence for good in Aberdeen. While he appeared fearless in defending the Word of God, he was a gentle, loving pastor to his people, showing much care for the poor in his parish. He was quick to rebuke sin from the pulpit but loved to exalt Christ in his preaching. He was thoroughly evangelical, easily understood and very earnest in public prayer. While he spent a lot of time reading good books, his main book was the Bible. Towards the end of his life he put all other books aside and made the Word of God his constant companion. He left this world expressing his hope in Christ Jesus as his only Saviour.

The final paper was by Rev Roderick MacLeod, on Free Presbyterian Church Principles. The title of the paper came from a remark once made by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a London minister, during a discussion on Church discipline, when he described the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland as "a Church unique in Christendom". The paper was based on Matthew 28: 18-20, particularly the words: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". We were glad to hear once again the principles of doctrine, worship and practice maintained by the Free Presbyterian Church, and we were reminded of the Church's responsibility to regulate these matters by the Word of God. The spiritual independence of the Church within the framework of the Establishment principle – that the Government has a duty to promote the true religion – was set before us. So was the promise of God's presence in the Church if she remains faithful.

Mr MacLeod kept in view the faithfulness and courage of Rev Donald Macfarlane, Rev Donald Macdonald, and all who adhered to their stand in 1893, when the Free Presbyterian Church began its separate existence. He referred specially to the Deed of Separation and made clear the cause for separation: the false teaching which had crept into the then Free Church. When it was clear that every objection against these errors had failed, Mr Macfarlane left along with the others to form the Free Presbyterian Church, which by the grace of God continues to the present.

The Conference came to an end at midday on Thursday. The young people, as on past occasions, presented both Housemothers with a bouquet of flowers in appreciation of their work. We are deeply indebted to the speakers also; they had clearly put a lot of work into their papers, which were well received. We hope that, through the blessing of the Most High, their labour will prove profitable, for time and eternity, to our young friends.



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## Looking Around Us

### The Day of Rest

A car salesman is to close his Mitsubishi showroom in Wirral after being told by the manufacturer that he must stay open on Sabbaths. He hopes to sell Mazda and Skoda cars on another site instead. Mark Mitchell's car sales operation "had been doing so well"; so it is obviously very disappointing for him to have to close. But it is good to see someone putting Sabbath-keeping before other considerations. And he is an example to others in an age when more and more pressure is being put on people to work on Sabbaths.

God has given us the Sabbath for our good. Mr Mitchell claims to be "a committed Christian" and says it is important for him to spend that day with his wife and sons. He explains: "I live my life within a biblical framework which sees Sunday as a day of rest, but I equally believe in a work-life balance which my staff appreciate. That is something we had managed to achieve here. Sunday was a significant and well-earned day off for our team to spend with their families and friends."

One cannot rely on a newspaper report giving a clear picture of Mr Mitchell's views on the Sabbath – which is a much more appropriate name for the day than the heathen word . There is much more to a proper use of the Sabbath than using it as a day to spend with the family; it is a day for the worship of God, a day for the good of our souls. And it is clear from the rest of the report that Mr Mitchell is a churchgoer. Yes, it is a day when families would normally expect to be together, but to spend it in visiting the wider family and friends is to distract ourselves from its main purpose: to worship God and to seek the good of our souls. And yes, it will normally be a day of rest for our bodies but, more importantly, it should be a day of spiritual activity. As the Shorter Catechism reminds us, the whole time is to be spent in "the public and private exercises of God's worship".

Mitsubishi claim that Sabbath is the day when people go to buy cars. They may be correct, but it is sad that so many people despise the Sabbath, which is a great privilege from God. Mr Mitchell is absolutely right to say it is not necessary to sell cars on a Sabbath. But one is rather disappointed to find out that he has no problem with buying milk or a loaf of bread on a Sabbath. This is not necessary either. A little foresight on a Saturday, and everyone can stock up with whatever will be needed over the weekend.

We have become used to most sales outlets – for everything from sweets to cars – being open in Britain on a Sabbath. So it comes as something of a surprise to discover that France largely shuts down over the weekend. Why should this not happen everywhere?

A group of Youth Conference members

## At the Pool of Bethesda

Beside the gospel pool  
appointed for the poor,  
From year to year my helpless soul  
has waited for a cure.

How often have I seen  
the healing waters move;  
And others, round me, setting in,  
their efficacy prove?

For my complaints remain;  
I feel the very same;  
As full of guilt and fear and pain  
as when at first I came.

O would the Lord appear  
my malady to heal!  
He knows how long I've languished  
here,  
and what distress I feel.

How often have I thought,  
Why should I longer lie?  
Surely the mercy I have sought  
is not for such as I.

But whither can I go?  
There is no other pool  
Where streams of sovereign virtue  
flow  
to make a sinner whole.

Here then, from day to day,  
I'll wait and hope and try:  
Can Jesus hear a sinner pray,  
yet suffer him to die?

No, He is full of grace;  
He never will permit  
A soul that fain would see His face  
to perish at His feet.