

The Young People's Magazine

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No 1

Single-Minded

Why are we in this world? To answer that question, some of you will very readily go back to the first answer in the Shorter Catechism: "To glorify God and to enjoy Him". It is the best answer you could give. God has created us and placed us in this world so that we might live to His glory.

But can a *sinner* live to God's glory? Every sin takes away from God's glory. And we are all sinners. Not even the holiest person who has ever lived has been able to stop sinning. Think of Paul; he was a remarkably godly man. If you read all that the Bible says about him after his conversion, you can scarcely find one sin mentioned. But go to his Epistle to the Romans and you find him complaining of being brought "into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members". And he goes on to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Why does he speak like this? Not because he was more sinful than other people but because he had a deep *understanding* of how sinful he was. But it did not leave him in despair. He also had a deep faith in the power of God to save. However great his sin, and especially the sin of his heart, Christ had done all that was necessary to save him from his sins. So he exclaimed: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". And that confidence in Christ's salvation was glorifying to God, as was his acknowledgment of the seriousness of his sin.

It was because of Paul's confidence in Christ's salvation that he could say, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief". If he, who considered himself to be the greatest sinner in the world, could be saved through the work of Christ, then every other sinner who hears the gospel ought also to trust in Christ. The message of salvation is faithful because it is true, and it is altogether worthy of being accepted. Indeed, it is *our* duty to receive this message, trusting in Christ, who is there revealed as the one Saviour for sinners. Only then do we begin to glorify God.

Paul was troubled about his sins, but he was absolutely single-minded in pressing on in the way of salvation towards heaven. "But this one thing I do,"

he said, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”. He was thinking of a runner pressing forward in a race, single-mindedly focused on reaching the finishing line as fast as possible. So Paul was single-mindedly focused on getting to the end of his course through this world, in a way that was glorifying to God.

Many people have been single-minded in getting rich. They have worked day and night to earn as much as they could. They have applied their minds to working out new ways of making money. And they may have succeeded. But money can very easily slip through our fingers. Yet, supposing we are able to hold on to our money till then, we cannot take any of it with us when we leave this world. How many have reached the end of their lives – having been successful in their quest for riches – only to discover that they had nothing for the next world! They were spiritually penniless. Their single-minded focus on getting rich had brought them to the verge of a lost eternity, yet even then they had no hope of entering into the riches of that inheritance in heaven which Christ has provided for those who believe in Him. How sad to be like Queen Elizabeth I when, as she looked death in the face, she made the pointless offer: “Millions of money for an inch of time”.

Others are single-minded in their pursuit of fame. They spare no effort in attracting people's attention and promoting themselves in the media. But God is ignored. And when a hundred years have passed, they are likely to be forgotten by almost everyone. In the long run, all their efforts will have been in vain. But, for those who follow Christ, that will not matter. Indeed they will for all eternity have the highest possible standing, as the children of God.

On a smaller scale, many young people spare no effort in trying to be popular. They do not worry about committing sin if only they will get the attention of those they want to have as their friends. But that friendship, if their efforts are successful, is bought at far too high a price. And, quite possibly, the friendship will not last for long. How much better to be a friend of God! That is a friendship that will never come to an end. If you have God as your friend, He will always take care of you and, when your life here is finished, He will take you safely to heaven.

A father told his son: “James, you should first get yourself established in a good trade. Then think of, and decide about, religion.” “Father,” replied the son, “Christ advises me differently; He says, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God’.” James was right. He had his priorities for life right because he listened to Christ. You may need to give your attention to many other things: your studies, for example, your employment and your duty to your parents. In all of these you may glorify God. But at the top of everyone's list of

priorities for life should be one thing: to seek a place in the kingdom of God.

Some people seek salvation half-heartedly. They try to keep one foot in the world and try to place their other foot in the kingdom of God. But if they continue in that way, they will never enter the kingdom. If people can be single-minded in seeking wealth, fame or popularity, surely we should be single-minded in seeking salvation. After all, is it what is only for this world that is most important, or what is also for heaven?

But how many, young and old, are single-minded in seeking what is totally unprofitable! The old lady, for instance, who never fails to attend her bingo club if she can possibly help it. When she comes home at the end of the evening, she can probably only say that she has less money in her purse and nothing to show for it. And if she has won a prize, how can she expect God's blessing on what she has gained by gambling? She has certainly done her soul no good. Nor will a teenager profit his soul by listening to pop music. How can anyone who is at all serious about the needs of his soul listen to songs which often contain bad language and immoral ideas? And even if a particular pop song is free from these, how could you turn from it to prayer with an easy conscience?

Many activities, of course, are not in themselves sinful. But let us remember the words which James quoted so appropriately: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God". We need to earn money, to eat, to take exercise and so on. But whatever we do, let us never forget that we are to do everything to the glory of God. And let us always give the first place to entering His kingdom. If we do not, we will lose our souls. And if we lose our souls, there can then be no hope of ever reaching heaven. How essential to be single-minded in seeking salvation *now*!

Those who single-mindedly seek for success in this world do so, Paul points out, "to obtain a corruptible crown", one that decays very quickly. But, like all other sincere followers of Christ, Paul sought a crown which is "incorruptible". It is surely worthwhile being serious about obtaining such a crown – serious in studying the Bible, serious in prayer, serious in seeking to obey God's commandments, serious in trying to live to God's glory. Although he knew that he was already in the kingdom of God, Paul did not become careless. Far from it. Today's believers should follow his example.

A dying man, no doubt conscious of how much time he had wasted, advised those gathered about his bed: "Mind the world less and God more". We would do well to follow his advice. Then we will be single-minded in seeking salvation. We have no time to waste. Another year has passed. Its sins have gone before us to judgement. So, at the beginning of a new year, let us – with a sense of urgency – seek grace to enter the kingdom of God.

The Book of Ruth

69. Christ Will Marry His Bride

Rev Keith M Watkins

Ruth 3:18b. "The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

Boaz had promised Ruth to do everything he could to marry her. He would not give up until it was done. Naomi assured Ruth: "The man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day". We saw last month that Boaz was wise and could solve difficulties. He was a righteous man who would ensure that the marriage was in accordance with the laws of Israel. He was a man of influence in the town of Bethlehem and people would listen to him. But these were not the only reasons why Ruth could trust Boaz.

To marry Ruth was going to be expensive. The man who married her would have to buy the land that belonged to Naomi's sons and husband. In some parts of the world even today, a man must pay a bride-price to the bride's family. If he is too poor to raise the money, the marriage cannot go ahead. But being "a mighty man of wealth" (2:1), Boaz was able to meet the cost of marrying Ruth. He was not like the foolish man who began to build a tower but could not finish, because he ran out of funds (see Luke 14:28-30). Boaz would soon be able to say, "Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife" (4:10).

What a price Christ had to pay to marry His people! The bride-price was the highest imaginable. He had to pay for all the wrongs done by sin against the law and justice of God. But Jesus is the gospel's "mighty Man of wealth". As the Son of God, He possesses all the riches of divine majesty, and is equal in power and glory to the Father and the Holy Spirit. As a Divine Person, He can afford to marry sinners. It cost Him His life, but with His precious blood He purchased the Church of God (see Acts 20:28). Ruth's marriage to Boaz was going to be free for her because Boaz would pay all the costs. The gospel is offered to you "without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1) because Christ paid the price for sin in full.

Boaz was able to meet the costs of marrying Ruth. But was he willing? When the nearer kinsman discovered the full cost, he refused to proceed (see 4:6). But Boaz had fully counted the cost of marrying Ruth and was willing to pay. Ruth could trust him. He would not break his promise.

The Lord Jesus Christ also counted the cost. He was willing to pay, even with His own blood, for His bride. When He entered Jerusalem, He said: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). The hour had

come for payment. The outstanding bill to divine justice for His bride's sin now fell due. It had to be paid. Would Christ try to avoid it? No! It was for this very purpose that He came into the world: to suffer for the redemption of His Church. He was ready to pay the price, to complete the marriage. A wonderful truth! Jesus was willing to die for sinners. No greater price could ever be paid for a bride. If only sinners were willing to go to such a willing Saviour!

It was not just that Boaz was willing to complete the marriage. He was absolutely determined to do so. That very day, as soon as possible, he was at the gate collecting the necessary witnesses before whom he could settle the matter with the nearer kinsman. Naomi's confidence was not misplaced when she assured Ruth that Boaz would do it "this day".

How wonderful was Christ's determination to marry His people! Even at 12 years old, His heart was fixed on it. Having remained in the temple when the others went home, He said to Mary, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). He had to be busy with the work that His Father gave Him to do: redeeming His bride. From His youth He was ready to die for His bride. Later, during His public ministry, the same determination was still there. He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day" (John 9:4). "I must work" – that is the language of determination. Sorrows and sufferings could not turn Him aside; "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (Isaiah 42:4). In the everlasting covenant He had promised to save sinners, and even though He had sworn to His own hurt, He would not change (see Psalm 15:4). He would not rest until He could say, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He had longed for the day when He could say to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17:4).

Now, can you hear of a Saviour so determined to marry sinners, and not yourself be determined to marry Him? By God's grace, set your heart on marriage to Christ. Say, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26). Do not let discouragements turn you out of the way.

Above all, Ruth could be sure of Boaz because it was clear that he was motivated by love. As someone has put it, "Ruth has won his heart". His love for her would not allow him to rest until they were married. Love is a mighty force! It will overcome many difficulties and be ready to pay a great price.

The Saviour loves His people with an almighty love. To obtain His bride, He had to go through death – even the death of the cross, the worst of deaths. But "love is strong as death" (Song of Solomon 8:6). Mighty waves of divine wrath poured over Him, but He was moved by love, and "many

waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (verse 7). Yes, "when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). He had loved them before, and even the horror of the cross could not stop His love.

Jacob's seven years of hard service in order to marry Rachel "seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Genesis 29:20), and Christ's years of sorrow in life and hours of agony in death could not turn Him away from the great love He had to His bride. He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). How? Because of "the joy that was set before Him" – the joy of marrying His people whom He loved with so great a love. Love made it certain that He would finish His work and complete His marriage with sinners.

Ruth could rest in the love of Boaz. Because he loved her, he would not rest until they were married. Now think on the love of Christ. There is no greater love. Love brought Him into the world. Love carried Him through a life of sorrows. Love took Him to the agonies of Calvary's death. It was all because of love – love to sinners! Can you think that such a loving Saviour would be unwilling to marry you? Forbid the thought! Come, and trust in His love. Jesus, the Boaz of the gospel, loves and receives sinners. He will marry His bride.

The Apostle of the North

5. Harris and Lewis

Rev D W B Somerset

We have seen John Macdonald settled in the Highland parish of Ferintosh and setting out on the preaching tours which earned him the name, *the Apostle of the North*. Last month's article described his visits to the remote islands of St Kilda.

The great preaching tours of the Apostle of the North, such as those to St Kilda and Ireland, must have involved considerable planning. But some of his most famous preaching occasions were not the result of planning at all. They happened unexpectedly in the providence of God. In 1822, for instance, when he was on his way to St Kilda for the first time, he was delayed by the weather, and had to land at Rodel in Harris. He was prevailed on to take some services, and he wrote in his diary: "In a strange land, and among a people hitherto unknown to me, the Sabbath was comfortably spent, and if its exercises are blessed to a single soul, my detention here is not be regretted". The "exercises" were indeed blessed to at least one soul, and this

was God's way of bringing a blessing to Harris which is still felt today.

Harris was in a state of spiritual darkness in 1822. There had been no evangelical minister on the island for a long time, if ever, and what gospel preaching there was had come from evangelists such as Finlay Munro. There was no regular teaching and, as a result, there was great spiritual ignorance. One man who had been spiritually awakened was the famous John Morison, the Harris bard, or poet, but he still lacked the assurance of salvation. He was a man of many talents: a blacksmith by trade, a man of enormous strength, an able engineer when the opportunity arose, a poet in both Gaelic and English (in which he was self-taught), a beautiful singer and, after his conversion, a spiritual leader in Harris.

He seems to have come under conviction of sin in 1821, and it was when he heard the Apostle of the North in 1822 that he came into the liberty of the gospel. The text on that occasion was: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Afterwards John Morison took over the work of the gospel in Harris. He held meetings at which he would read the Scriptures and comment on them. Those who disagreed would argue with him, and many were converted as a result of the discussions which followed. In 1823 most of the people of Harris stopped attending the Church of Scotland, but it is not now known why. The burden of all these people's spiritual needs came onto the shoulders of John Morison and in 1828 he was appointed their catechist. In 1830, eight years after his first visit, the Apostle of the North returned to Harris once again. Here is John Morison's description of what happened, as given to Macintosh Mackay, later a minister in Harris.

"Someone," he confided, "came one evening to the smithy where I was hard at work at the anvil and mentioned that Dr Macdonald had come. I tried to subdue my emotion, and I longed for the absence of the messenger. And whenever the messenger had gone, I ran to the smithy door and bolted it. I could then, when alone, give scope to my emotions. I danced for joy – danced round and round the smithy floor, for I felt a load taken off my spirit suddenly. I danced till I felt tired, and I knelt down and prayed and gave thanks."

In 1834 there was a revival in Harris, and at the Disruption in 1843 almost the entire population joined the Free Church. A Free Church minister was at last settled in 1852, and John Morison died soon afterwards – his desire to see an evangelical minister on the island having been fulfilled. John Macdonald had the highest regard for John Morison, and he once told the men who had spoken at a Question Meeting, "I know a blacksmith in Harris who knows more theology than you all". So the short visits of the Apostle of the North to Harris were of lasting significance.

Another brief visit, but with great consequences, was to Uig, Lewis in 1827. Again he had been delayed on his way to St Kilda, and he agreed to go to Uig to assist at the communion. Lewis, like Harris, had been in spiritual darkness, but an awakening had been taking place since about 1822 in the districts of Barvas and Lochs. In 1824 Alexander MacLeod had become minister of Uig, and an awakening had started in his parish as well. He was the first evangelical minister to be settled on the island. When he went to Uig he found that things were extraordinarily dead. At a prayer meeting, he heard one of the elders praying, "We have come a long way to this meeting and we have put ourselves to a great deal of trouble and we hope that Thou wilt reward us by casting some wreck on the shore on our way home". When a ship was wrecked, the people helped themselves to anything valuable that survived. Another elder prayed for a good catch of cod and ling to reward their service in attending the meeting, while a third spoke of the death of Christ as "a great calamity". Because of this ignorance Alexander MacLeod held no communion for his first three years in Uig. The first communion was in 1827, and this was one of the famous occasions in Scottish church history.

When it was announced that Macdonald was to preach on the Saturday, there was great excitement, but this was turned to disappointment when it seemed that he would not arrive in time. In his place a Moderate minister, William MacRae of Barvas, was asked to conduct the service. One man, Murdo Mackenzie, was so vexed at this that he went and sat behind the preaching-box, with his back to it. He did not wish to miss the service completely, as it was the first communion for such a long time, but he did not wish to see Mr William. But unknown to him Macdonald had arrived and was taking the service after all. When the psalm was given out, Murdo Mackenzie said to himself, "You cannot spoil that on me anyway". Then came the prayer, and as Mackenzie listened he said, "Pity him who says that Mr William has no grace". As the prayer continued he said, "If I have grace myself, so has Mr William". As the Apostle of the North still continued, he expressed himself in even stronger terms. We are not told when he finally discovered his mistake.

On the Sabbath 7000 were present at the communion, but only 20 went to the Lord's Table, and only six of them from Uig. There had been 1000 communicants at previous communions, but they were now ashamed to come to the Lord's Table. People were so overcome with weeping during the service that at one point only three were singing: Macdonald himself and the two precentors. The cloth on the communion table was so wet with tears that it had to be wrung out afterwards. On the Monday, Macdonald preached again with great power. The next year there were 9000 at the communion, and the

work of revival continued steadily for years. As late as 1842 James Buchanan, a noted minister of the time, wrote of the Uig revival: "Multitudes were converted, and a general spirit of prayer poured out from on high. And this interesting revival has continued to grow steadily down to the present time."

Willie's Bible

It was a lonely little house, roughly built with logs, sitting in the middle of a huge Australian plain. Outside the front door there was a little garden, and around the house some small fields had been fenced off. From these fields Alex Cameron tried to earn a living for himself and his wife Jean. Theirs was a happy home, especially after little Willie was born.

Some years before, Alex and Jean had left Inveraray in Scotland to set out on the long sea journey to Australia. They both sought to live in the fear of God and, as they watched their little baby grow, they looked forward to teaching him the truths of the Bible. But one day, when Willie was just 4, he became sick and before long he died. By the garden gate, the sad father dug a grave in which the Camerons laid the body of their precious child.

One evening, some time later, Alex and Jean went outside to watch the sunset. He leaned over the gate and she stood beside him, her arms folded. "It'll be about dawn in Inveraray", Jean remarked.

"So they say", Alex answered, "and I'm sorry for it; I'd rather they were looking at the sunset the same time as us."

"Well, there's neither sunrise nor sunset in heaven", replied his wife sensibly, "and we're best to look forward there, not back to Inveraray. It's true there's many we love there; but the one we love best the Lord has taken to Himself."

As they talked back and fore, Jean told her husband: "There is one thing that troubles me: we are so cut off from the Lord's work here. When we had Willie, it was serving God to care for him and bring him up the way he should go. But now we seem like the cattle, only living for food and sleep. There's nobody to speak a kind Christian word to."

"Yet still I think God guided us here," Alex told her; "it's no use fretting, Jean; we can only go on doing the right. The Lord has His own way of doing His work and, whether He sees fit to use us or not, to Him be all the glory."

Jean gave no answer but she seemed to agree. Perhaps a noise in the distance had already attracted her attention. "There's a horseman coming", she said after a little while. "Where can he be making for? It'll be dark in no time."

"He'll have to turn in with us, I reckon," Alex replied, as they watched him coming closer.

The sun had almost set when the man pulled up his horse at the gate. "Is it far across the moor?" he asked.

"It's a good five miles", Alex said, "and there's no track beyond this place."

"Is there anywhere I can put up for the night?" the young horseman asked.

"We'll make you welcome here", Jean told him; "the dark will overtake you if you go on."

The rider's name was Paul Scott. A well-dressed young man, he looked rather displeased as he glanced at the little cottage. Clearly he would have much preferred somewhere more comfortable to spend the night, but he had little choice. To have continued on the further five miles on the trackless plain would have been most unwise; he could easily have missed the next settlement. After seeing his horse safely stabled in the shed, Paul came inside. He looked around but was none too happy with the rough furniture in the living room and the coarse crockery Jean was placing on the table.

Alex placed a bowl of water in the little bedroom and invited his guest in. Paul was glad that, at least, the bed was clean. He washed, and just as he was about to come back to the living room he heard Alex whisper to his wife: "No one but ourselves would know it was a grave". Paul was suspicious. Was he going to be murdered too? he asked himself. He thought of the gold pieces hidden among the clothes in his pack. He took his pistol from his pocket and examined it carefully before putting it back again. He could at least defend himself, he thought.

Paul sat down at the table with his hosts. The food was good but there was little conversation. Obviously Paul was uneasy, while Alex and Jean were not used to visitors. Then, when everyone was finished, Alex said solemnly: "Hand me the Bible, Jean, and let us worship God".

Paul's suspicions fled at once; he was sure that those who cared about reading the Bible could be trusted. Alex read from the chapter in 2 Kings about the death of the Shunammite woman's son. And, as he prayed, he asked God to comfort those who had buried their only child at the door.

Paul now understood the whispered words about the grave; he could relax. He wished the Camerons a warm Goodnight and shut the door behind him. And Jean remarked, "He is wonderfully better after worship".

Paul lay awake for a long time; he had a lot to think about. He knew he did not have his mother's religion. But he told himself: "There must be something in it to make me so sure that I can trust rough people like these. I wish I'd been more careful of that Bible Mother put in my box. I don't suppose I could get one round these parts, but I'll ask the fellow tomorrow

if he knows of any place where I could get one. And how content they seem to be in this lonely cottage!" Then, showing how little understanding he had of sin, he thought, "I've never done anything wrong, but I should go mad if I had to stay here".

At breakfast the next morning, everyone spoke freely. Then they again had family worship together. Paul could not pluck up courage to mention a Bible until he was already on his horse and saying goodbye to Alex at the gate. Alex called to his wife: "The gentleman wants a Bible. He has unfortunately lost his own. There's our Willie's, but you'd hardly like . . ." He didn't finish the sentence but Jean replied: "He shall have it and welcome". And she dashed into the house to get the Bible. "It's a little worn," she said apologetically, "but our Willie's in heaven now."

Jean turned away to dry her tears and Paul rode away. Alex and Jean watched him as he quickly rode farther and farther into the distance. "Maybe", they told each other, "a blessing will rest on Willie's Bible."

Paul turned round and waved his hat before he disappeared out of sight. That was the last Alex Jean saw of him. But no doubt their prayers followed him. Very likely they often asked God to bless to Paul's soul the little Book they had given him. It was God who, in His providence, had ordered all the circumstances of that day so that Paul arrived at their home when it was too late to go any further. And it was God who ordered all the other circumstances of the evening so that Paul was brought to think as seriously as he did.

Some time later, Paul set sail for Britain. What he had done with the Bible before then, we do not know. But on the long voyage home he read it and reread it and, we are told, it was used to make him "wise unto salvation". He learned now what a helpless sinner he was, and the Holy Spirit used the Bible to reveal to him Christ as the Saviour of sinners. How glad Paul's mother was to see him! Not only had her son returned, but he had returned as a spiritually new-born child.

Probably the Camerons never heard anything more about Paul, and the blessing he got through their Bible. It seems that they still felt sad to be "cut off from the Lord's work". But they went on with their ordinary everyday work. God tells us: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might". And if they sought to do so, in dependence on the grace of God, were they not living to God's glory?

They believed that they were where God had placed them in His providence. No doubt they were right; remote though their roughly-built cottage was, they were where He was pleased to use them for the good of at least one soul. We should not only seek to have God's blessing on our own souls but we should also seek to be of use to the souls of others.

*For Junior Readers***Every Step Will Show**

I wonder if any of you have an autograph book? They used to be very common some years ago. Children would collect autographs, with a small poem or greeting, from their family and friends. One verse that people sometimes used was:

“Your future lies before you like a field of driven snow,
Tread very carefully, for every step will show.”

What does it mean? It tells you that the time ahead of you is like a white, snow-covered field which no one has yet walked on. So the new year which has just started is like a snow-covered field. Until it begins, you have made no footprints on it. But how you behave this year, what you say, and what decisions you make, will all be like footprints on the field.

God sees every step you take in life and keeps a record of your behaviour. And what does the wise man in the Book of Ecclesiastes say? “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement.”

You may soon forget what you say. You may soon forget how you behave. But God does not forget. You hope your parents and family will soon forget that time when you were disobedient or unkind or ungrateful or angry. But, the Bible tells us that “God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”.

Surely, then, as you begin this year, you should resolve to seek the Lord. Christ tells you: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God”. He tells you to make this your priority. As the godly minister Robert Murray M'Cheyne wrote:

“When Samuel was young, he first knew the Lord,
He slept in His smile and rejoiced in His word.
So most of God's children are early brought nigh:
O seek Him in youth; to a Saviour fly.”

A godly lady in M'Cheyne's congregation left an account in her diary of a children's meeting which she attended. One minister pled seriously with the children to come to Christ. He gave them three reasons:

1. Because your danger is very real.
2. Because your sins are very great.
3. Because Christ is willing to receive you.

Will you not listen to these reasons and seek the Lord now before your life disappears like “mist on the mountains” and “ships on the sea”?

Then another minister spoke and I will leave you with his good advice:

“If you were offered a rich present – a gold coin or a fine dress – you would not wait until you were old. You should go immediately to Jesus, who has unsearchable riches – gold tried in the fire and a beautiful robe to give you. You cannot have better company than Christ’s in your journey through the world; and you cannot have a better guide than the Lord. You cannot have a better home than heaven. . . . Therefore you must come to Christ now. You should offer up that great prayer, ‘O satisfy us early with Thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days’.

“Some think that religion is a gloomy thing, but Moses (who wrote this Psalm) was a wiser man than any of you. He said, ‘Satisfy us early with Thy mercy’. Yes, if you come to Christ you will never repent of it. You are young just now, but even if you live long, you will never meet with anyone who was sorry they came so soon to Jesus. But you will meet with many who were sorry they did not come sooner. May the Lord find you, and enable you to find Him!”

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

On the Sea of Galilee

One day, crowds of people came to listen to Jesus beside the Sea of Galilee. He saw two fishing boats by the sea. The fishermen had come ashore and were mending their nets.

One of the boats belonged to Peter. Jesus went into his boat and asked him to push it out a little from the shore. Peter did what Jesus asked him. We should always do just what Jesus tells us. Everything is good that Jesus tells us to do.

Jesus sat down in Peter’s boat. He began to teach the people. They were all standing or sitting on the land while He taught them from the sea.

When Jesus finished teaching the people, he spoke to Peter and the men who were with him. He told them to take the boat farther out on the water and let down their nets into the sea. Then Peter told Jesus what had happened through the night. They had been working hard all the time and had caught no fish at all.

So did Peter refuse to do what Jesus told him? No, not at all. Because Jesus told him to do so, Peter was willing to try again.

And what happened? Did they catch just a few fish? No, they caught so many that their net broke.

What did Peter and his friends do then? They made signs to their friends in the other boat to come and help them. Then they filled the two boats with the fish from the broken net. Now both boats were so full that they were almost sinking.

Peter was amazed. All night they could not catch any fish; now they had two boats full of fish. He knew that it was Jesus' power that made the difference.

So he came to Jesus and said: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". Peter was right to say he was sinful. He was right too to feel that he was not fit to be with holy Jesus.

But he was wrong to ask Jesus to go away. And Jesus was good to Peter. He did not go away. We should ask Jesus to come to us and pardon all our sins and make us holy.

Submitting to the Bible

J B Waterbury

This is chapter 27, as edited, from the book, *Advice to a Young Christian* – letters from a minister to a young converted friend. Last month's chapter ended by encouraging readers to learn the doctrines of the Bible thoroughly.

You should try to get some spiritual nourishment from every part of the Bible. When you study the historical parts, you can occasionally stop to think over what you have read. You can ask yourself if you have clearly understood the facts recorded, and the lessons you should learn from them. In this way, your memory will be helped and your heart will, I trust, often be touched.

Before I leave this subject, allow me to say a word or two on the spirit with which you should read this holy Book. You should read it with a spirit of sincere faith and childlike obedience. Many parts of Scripture will appear almost impossible to explain even after you have studied them carefully. And many doctrines – about God, the angels and heaven, for instance – are too deep for us to understand properly. God has given to man a revelation which includes majestic truths about eternity and about Himself. It brings into view a spiritual world and sends down upon us the light of its glory. Such a revelation must contain things which we will find altogether mysterious. It must present various truths which can only be received on the simple testimony of God – and this is faith.

When I am reading the Bible, shall I therefore reject even one of its doctrines because it is more difficult to understand than others? Am I not

bound to receive even those truths which I cannot understand – if I find them recorded in the Bible? Having settled the fact that God has inspired the Bible, I must come to it as a book which is completely free from error.

Because of his limitations, Paul felt there were many things he could only see as through a glass darkly. And so must I. Yet, if I am a true Christian, the time is near when I shall see them as clearly as I see a friend face to face. Although I must confess that there are many deep truths which I now know only in part, a day is coming when I shall know them as fully as I myself am known. Even the great apostle ranked himself as a child in the knowledge of divine things. He was content to wait until that knowledge would be expanded in heaven.

If your father – a scientist who is familiar with how the heavenly bodies move – was to take you as a child to his observatory and point them out to you. If he was to tell you that he had measured how far they are away and calculated the paths on which they move, would you believe him? O yes; your father would not deceive you, and you are his trusting child. You could not understand, but you would believe your father. You would have no doubt that he was telling you the truth. You would be even more surprised if he was also to tell you that you also would be able to make these calculations in a few years' time assuming you were still alive. If your father had not said it, you could not have believed it. But you would trust *him*.

This is precisely the spirit in which you must study the Scriptures. It is your Father who speaks. Sometimes He speaks of high and mysterious things, but remember that you are bound to trust what He says. When doubts would harass your mind, flee to the Word of God and submit your understanding completely to what He says. When troubles come your way, go at once to this fountain of comfort. When doubts about your being accepted by God come over your mind like a dark cloud, here in this blessed Book is the Sun of righteousness to chase away the cloud and restore you to calmness.

There is a spirit in the world that would undervalue the plain testimony of the Bible, and make it, like the heathen oracles of old, speak in an indefinite way, but you must resolve to cling to your precious Bible. You must love even those doctrines which would cause you most to deny yourself and humble your soul. Do not be ashamed of those views of truth which vain and proud men think no one believes except very ordinary people. The Bible, you know, was written for all kinds of people. The poor can claim it as their most precious legacy. What though there be in it some mysterious doctrines you cannot explain; is it not your duty to sit in meekness and faith at the Saviour's feet, and receive without objection the words which drop from His lips?

In this world we are compassed about with infirmities, and we are dependent on God for the least ray of heavenly comfort. On the one hand we suffer from intellectual pride, and on the other from deep-rooted and sinful prejudices. At one time we wander from God and duty, and at another we return disappointed and dejected. Let us then take the lowest place possible before God. Let us submit, with the spirit of children, to the simple truth as it is in Jesus. Let us plead with the Holy Spirit to guide us through this dark desert. And let us look forward by faith to the period when we shall emerge from the darkness of this life into the unclouded and eternal day of heaven.

Looking Around Us

God Answers Prayer

The Daily Mail prints questions on everyday topics sent in by readers and invites other readers to send in answers. One such question was about war memorials. The second answer the paper printed, from a reader in Staffordshire, made no reference to war memorials. Instead it told, from the biography of Rev William Grant, about an incident in Helmsdale in the north of Scotland during the Second World War.

At that time Mr Grant was the Free Presbyterian minister in Halkirk, but his congregation also included Helmsdale. One Monday morning he was waiting at Helmsdale station for a train to take him home to Halkirk. Also at the station were a large number of soldiers waiting for a train to take them in the opposite direction.

Himself a soldier during the First World War, Mr Grant stood on the steps of the railway bridge and called the men around him and prayed. He asked the Most High to bless them and their families, to be with them in whatever lay ahead in the unknown future, to bring them all back in safety if that was His will. And, above all else, he prayed that they would entrust their souls to Jesus, the great Saviour, who died for those who will believe in Him.

More than 20 years later, an old lady in Helmsdale told Mrs Grant that all these soldiers for whom her husband had prayed so earnestly came back safely from the war. It is good for newspaper readers today to be reminded that God answers prayer.

2004 Youth Conference

This year's conference will be held in Aberdeen from Tuesday, April 6, to Thursday, April 8, God willing. Further details in next month's magazine.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2003-04

Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Bracadale:* James Campbell. *Dingwall:* Joanna Mackenzie. *Farr:* Ruth M MacQueen. *Halkirk:* Cherith Sutton. *Inverness:* Ben Fiddes, Hanna J Schouten. *Kyle:* Joanne Whear. *London:* Naomi K Rowland. *Ness:* Nathanael Smith. *North Uist:* Margaret J Macdonald. *South Harris:* Iain MacLean. *Stornoway:* Kimberly Ferguson, Angus D Macleod.

Intermediate Section: *Bonar Bridge:* Rebecca Campbell. *Bracadale:* Neil Campbell. *Dingwall:* Kathryn Mackenzie, Neil MacLean. *Dunoon:* Esther Malley. *Farr:* Caitlin MacQueen. *Fort William:* William S Mackinnon. *Glasgow:* Neil Freeke, Kenneth Gillies, Marion Macleod. *Highworth:* Rebecca Woodhams. *Inverness:* Mark Campbell, Chloe and Lois Fiddes, Angus Murray, Jonathan Schouten. *Kyle:* Paul Whear. *London:* Rebecca Munns, Josie van Kralingen. *Ness:* Sarah Smith. *North Harris:* Cailean and Eilidh J McCombe. *North Tolsta:* Chrisann Macleod. *North Uist:* Rhoda Cameron, John MacDonald, Kathleen Macdonald, Kerri Macinnes. *Portree:* Finlay MacRaid. *Scaynes Hill:* Sam Main. *South Harris:* Stewart MacLean. *Stornoway:* Anne R Dickie, Stephen Macdonald. *Swordale:* Sara Macleod. *Tomatin:* Lois V Cameron-Mackintosh. *Westerham:* Edward Hanks.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Rebecca Buchanan. *Bonar Bridge:* Sandy Campbell. *Crowborough:* Heidi Woodhams. *Dingwall:* Beverly MacKenzie, Sarah MacLean. *Glasgow:* Laura Chisholm, Hugh Gillies, Donald Macleod. *Guildford:* Matthew Risbridger. *Inverness:* James E M Fraser, Natalie MacAskill, Catherine Schouten. *Kyle:* Daniel Whear. *Larne:* Philip Acton. *London:* Elizabeth Munns, David Rowland, Alexander and Constance Turnbull, Jeremy and Justin van Kralingen. *North Harris:* Sara McCombe. *North Tolsta:* Mark Mackenzie. *North Uist:* John Cameron, Alastair, Christina and Flora M Macdonald. *Scaynes Hill:* Abigail and Martha Main. *Shieldaig:* Jennifer Goldby. *Stornoway:* Karina Ferguson, Alasdair G Gillies. *Stratherrick:* David Fraser, John A Fraser. *Swordale:* Murdo S Macleod. *Ullapool:* Siobhan and Stuart MacCulloch.

Upper Primary Section: *Barnoldswick:* Philip Martin, Robert Ross. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Dingwall:* Alistair Mackenzie. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Isla and Jonathon Macdonald. *Farr:* Alasdair MacQueen. *Fort William:* Rachel Mackinnon. *Glasgow:* Fiona Beaton, Donna Chisholm, Catherine Freeke, Kate and Neil Gillies, Rachel Macleod, Peter Macpherson. *Inverness:* Andrew Campbell, Anna Fraser, Thomas Maton. *Larne:* Deborah Acton, Alison, and Renwick Sharp. *London:* Edward and William Munns, Rupert Turnbull. *Ness:* Joshua Smith. *North Harris:* Donald R Macleod. *North Tolsta:* Sean Macleod. *North Uist:* Margaret Cameron, John A Macdonald, Laura Macinnes. *Peasmarsh:* Alasdair Bailey. *Salisbury:* Jill Buchanan. *Scaynes Hill:* Philip Main. *South Harris:* Catherine Macleod. *Stornoway:* Sarah Gillies, Lauren Macdonald, Robert MacQuarrie. *Uig:* Murdo George Mackay. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming. *Westmuir:* Ailidh Drake-Watson.

Lower Primary Section: *Barnoldswick:* David Martin, Emma Norris, Rebecca Ross. *Croydon:* Andrew Hickman. *Dingwall:* Alasdair and Laura MacLean, Andrew and Graham MacLeod, Ruth Macleod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Annabelle and Daniel Macdonald. *Farr:* Finlay and Muriel Macrae-Cramp. *Gairloch:* Donald and Rachel Mackenzie, Catherine and Mairi Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Ian Gillies, Iona Gillies, Ruairidh Macleod, Callum Macpherson. *Inverness:* Jonathan Fiddes, Nikki MacLennan, Peter Schouten. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *Larne:* Cameron Sharp. *London:* Claudia, Edward and Oliver Martin, Andrew Munns, Jemima, Jeremy and Lucy Turnbull, Amy van Kralingen. *Ness:* Anna and Gerrit Smith. *North Tolsta:* Lucy Macleod. *North Uist:* Fraser MacDonald, Angus Macinnes. *Raasay:* Joseph MacGowan. *Stornoway:* Leah Beaton, Cirsty Gillies. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Ullapool:* Lewis Mackenzie. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand, Jayne-Anne Fleming.

A New Year's Thought

Time, by moments, steals away,
First the hour and then the day;
Small the daily loss appears,
Yet it soon amounts to years.
Thus another year has flown;
Now it is no more our own
(If it brought or promised good)
Than the years before the flood.
But (may none of us forget)
It has left us much in debt;
Favours from the Lord received,
Sins that have His Spirit grieved,
Marked by an unerring hand,
In His book recorded stand;
Who can tell the vast amount,
Placed to each of our account?
Happy the believing soul!
Christ for you has paid the whole;
While you own the debt is large,
You may plead a full discharge.
But, poor careless sinner, say,
What can you to justice pay?
Tremble, lest when life is past,
Into prison you be cast!
Will you still increase the score?
Still be careless as before?
O forbid it, gracious Lord,
Touch their spirits by Thy Word!
Now, in mercy, to them show
What a mighty debt they owe.
All their unbelief subdue;
Let them find forgiveness too.
Spared to see another year,
Let Thy blessing meet us here;
Come, Thy dying work revive,
Bid Thy drooping garden thrive.
Sun of righteousness, arise;
Warm our hearts, and bless our eyes;
Let our prayer Thy kindness move,
Make this year a time of love.

John Newton