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Learning from History

“Those who cannot remember the past”, someone has said, “are doomed to repeat it.” That is why we should make a point of learning from our past experience – from the mistakes we make, for instance, so that we do not repeat them. But we should also try to learn from history – so that we do not repeat the mistakes which others have made in the past.

In history books we see the past through the eyes of the writers. They may interpret events wisely and helpfully or they may not. Indeed the way in which some of them select the events they describe may be quite misleading, and the way they interpret what happened may be even less satisfactory. But one book is perfectly reliable when it tells us the facts of history. That one book, of course, is the Bible. And in its interpretation of the events it describes, it is just as dependable.

You may sometimes wonder why so much of the Bible is taken up with history – telling about various incidents in the lives of individual men and women and about events in the history of nations, especially of Israel. One reason is that Israel was the nation through which God gave His revelation to the world. And some of these people were prophets through whom that revelation was given.

But there is another reason, on which we will focus here. All these men and women had to face various difficulties and temptations and opportunities. From what the Bible tells us about them, we see how they faced these challenges. Some faced them wisely, like Ruth and Isaiah; others, like Ahab and Jezebel, reacted wickedly. But they are all examples for us – either to follow or to avoid. If we do not remember the history of such people – these examples from the past – we are the more likely to repeat their sins, and the less likely to imitate those who reacted to their circumstances in a God-glorifying way.

Think of Noah, who obeyed God when he was called to do what seemed perfectly ridiculous to other people; he was told to build an ark although there was no sign whatever of a flood. But Noah realised that, if *God* told him to build the ark, then to do so must be the most sensible thing in all the

world. We will never be faced with exactly the same command as Noah, but the story of Noah has much to teach us. We too are to believe God; so whatever – through the Bible – He tells us to do, we should believe that the right thing is to obey. We can be sure that Noah prayed for God's help every day when he was building the ark; we too should ask God for His help and grace in trying to obey Him. Very likely lots of people thought Noah was absolutely mad to build an ark on dry ground – and did not hide from Noah what they thought. But Noah just went on with what God told him to do. We too should refuse to be influenced by other people who make clear that they think we are mad, and very old-fashioned, when we try to obey the Bible.

No one outside Noah's family followed him into the ark although he spoke about the flood God was going to send. He was safe because he believed God and began to build the ark long before there was any sign of a flood. The others could have followed Noah's example and taken refuge in the ark, but they did not believe what God had said; they refused to make use of their opportunity. So they all perished, while Noah and his family were saved. God has promised there will never be another worldwide flood, but if we do not remember the past, we are doomed to experience God's judgement in another way – by being sent to perish in a lost eternity.

Now look at Moses. He had a wonderful opportunity to live out his life in luxury in Pharaoh's palace. But that luxury was also a temptation – to live apart from the people of God. He was in no doubt what he should do. He recognised that other things were far more valuable than wealth; this world's riches, for one thing, could not last for ever. He must have something better; so he joined the people of God, the Children of Israel, in their affliction. He left Pharaoh's palace to join a race of slaves.

But Moses saw the reward God's true followers will have, especially in another world. He saw his position as an opportunity to follow God more closely. And what a wonderful opportunity he was given to serve God by leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt! As he did so, he experienced many difficulties. But he was carried through them all because he trusted in God.

Moses resisted every temptation to make the most of the things of the world at the expense of his soul; he grasped the opportunity to find blessings for his soul. So, when we are tempted to seek success in this life and forget about the needs of our souls, let us remember Moses, who gave up everything so that he could be safe with the people of God. And as we remember him, let us seek grace to serve the one living and true God. If we do so, we will never lack anything we really need.

When God spoke to Moses, he obeyed. But Pharaoh, Egypt's ruler, refused to listen; he was determined not to obey the true God. He had every

opportunity to learn about God from Moses and Aaron but, even when he was shown God's power in various signs and wonders, he resisted. He resisted even when God sent terrible plague after terrible plague, against him and his country. These solemn facts are preserved in Bible history so that we may see the dreadful consequences of resisting God. Pharaoh is perhaps the clearest example in history of a sinner hardening his heart against God. If we do not learn from the tragic way he was swept away by the Red Sea – if we forget the past – history will be repeated and we too will be swept away into a lost eternity. How much better to learn the spiritual lessons which God has set out for us in the Bible, and so escape the wrath to come.

Think now of King Saul. When Samuel anointed him to rule over Israel, he seemed to be perfectly suited to the position. He rose to the occasion when the Ammonites invaded the country and threatened the people of Jabesh. At once he summoned an army, moved swiftly against the invaders and defeated them. The truth is that he started off well, but he did not continue well. Even when the prophet Samuel challenged him about his sins, he found it very easy to convince himself that he was indeed obeying God. Anything he did wrong – or so he told himself – was only a little wrong. But he ended up consulting a witch and was defeated in battle, showing that he did not have God's favour.

Saul had a wonderful opportunity to show his people Israel a godly example and to encourage them to obey the Lord wholeheartedly. Instead he gave in to various temptations; he assumed that he had the right to decide how far he needed to go in obeying God's commands. His example too is preserved for us in the Bible so that we might learn that we must serve God always, and with our whole heart. If we will not learn this lesson, we are doomed to follow Saul into a lost eternity.

David, Saul's successor, was a very different king. He sincerely loved God; he showed a good example to his people. Even when he was young he had taken the Lord to be his Shepherd – to guide him through the difficulties and temptations and opportunities of life. But no one, no matter how careful his past life has been, can afford to begin trusting in himself in any way. David is a warning to God's children that temptation remains a very real threat. David's life teaches them always to look to God and never to depend on themselves. Only in this way will they get safely through life. This prayer from Psalm 17 should always be theirs: "Keep me".

These are just a few of the lives God has set before us as examples of godliness – or as warnings against ungodliness, or even against slipping back into sin. Let us seek God's blessing on His Word so that we too may learn to seek first the kingdom of God and so avoid the doom of the ungodly.

Missionary to India

10. Back in Scotland

Alexander Duff had spent the years from 1830 to 1834 in India. His main work there was to teach the truths of the Bible, with real success, in his school in Calcutta. But he had to sail for Scotland because of ill-health.

Duff's health improved as the *John M'Lellan* sailed away towards Scotland in July 1834. But progress was very slow as the ship attempted to sail south in the teeth of fierce monsoon winds. Even the animals kept on deck, to provide food for passengers and crew, were swept overboard, and after six weeks' uncomfortable sailing the ship had to put in to Madras to take on new stores. As the weeks went by, Duff was becoming more reconciled to the thought of leaving behind his work in India, for the time being at least, and returning to Scotland. He saw it was God's providence that had brought this change about and he knew that to resist God's will in this matter would be quite wrong. He trusted that God would overrule everything for good. And to read the Bible three times, from beginning to end, on this voyage must in itself have been a blessing to his soul.

Arrived in Cape Town, he was able to walk to church, where his little son, born just after leaving Calcutta, was baptised. It was late December before the *John M'Lellan* sailed into Greenock. The hard frost of that day was a complete contrast to the heat of India. Duff's first public meeting to speak about the Indian mission was in Falkirk, and the amount of money collected surprised everyone. But when his report came before the Church of Scotland's committee on missions, there was a marked lack of interest. Duff's spirits were only raised when two students for the ministry called on him seeking information about his work; they were considering if it was their duty to join the mission. One of them was Robert Murray M'Cheyne, who did not become a missionary, but was an exceptionally godly minister in Dundee till he died in 1843 at the age of just 29.

A friend asked Duff to speak, in a house in Edinburgh, to a few people who met once a month to pray for foreign missions. Uncomfortable about the committee's attitude, Duff wanted to go away when he found the room crowded. But he was persuaded to stay and address the people. Indeed so strong was the impression he made that one English visitor who was present appeared the next morning at the house where he was staying in Portobello, outside Edinburgh. He brought a large donation for the mission.

That next day Duff was summoned, without explanation, to appear before the committee. The chairman, Dr Brunton, began the meeting with prayer and then began to tell why he had called it. It was a time of political turmoil,

when many people were afraid of what might happen if crowds were stirred up at public meetings and went on the rampage. Brunton told the committee members that Duff had not informed him about the previous day's meeting, or what he was going to speak about, and the chairman claimed that this was totally out of order. Brunton wanted to lay down rules as to how Duff would act in the future, in these unsettled times.

Duff then stood up and addressed the committee from the middle of the floor. He assured them that he would carry out whatever duties they would give him to do, but he was a minister himself and he insisted firmly that he should have a proper freedom to speak as the Lord led him in His providence. He promised to do all he possibly could to create, throughout the Church, a deeper interest in the Indian mission. He then sat down. No one else spoke. In fact, everyone left the room except Duff and Brunton. It was the missionary who broke the silence, saying quietly: "Probably we have had enough of the subject for this day". The chairman must have agreed, and the matter was forgotten.

Duff's efforts to create an interest in missions took a step forward when, in April 1835, Brunton passed on to him an invitation to visit the Church of Scotland congregations in London. Duff went south and addressed meetings in all these congregations. Indeed John Macdonald – one of the London ministers, who also was an exceptionally godly man – gave up his charge in response to the news from India to become a missionary in Calcutta.

One day, when Duff was at breakfast, about to go out to a final meeting with representatives of all the congregations, his malaria came back with force. As he lifted a cup of coffee to his mouth, he began to shiver violently. His malaria also prevented him from addressing some of the big religious meetings which were then held in London every May. Friends looked after the ill missionary for three weeks in London. And he was still unwell when he set off by boat for Scotland; indeed it was said that he looked like a skeleton. But he was anxious to be in Edinburgh in time for the meetings of his Church's General Assembly.

Yet it was doubtful if there would be time to hear anything about the work of the Indian mission; there was so much other business to attend to in 1835. It is clear that many did not share Duff's enthusiasm. Before the Assembly began, Duff was reading through the records of the mission committee when he came across a letter he had sent them. It was a reply to a message from the previous chairman conveying the good news that up to £1200 would, from then on, be given to the mission every year. Duff was not so impressed. "Not £1200," he wrote, "but £12 000, and do not stop at that." As he now looked at the letter he could see what someone had written in the margin: "Is the

man mad? Has the Indian sun turned his head?" In fact, the writer of the comment was now the chairman of the committee. But he assured Duff: "No more will be heard on the subject".

Yet the fact that the comment was made makes it clear that there were many – they belonged to what was known as the Moderate party – in the Church of Scotland at that time who had no enthusiasm for mission work; indeed a great number of them had no real concern for the souls of sinners anywhere. Others, worried about Duff's health, tried to persuade him not to attempt to address the Assembly. But the missionary remembered God's promise to Paul, the greatest of all missionaries: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness". Still unwell, he got up from his bed to speak to the ministers and elders who had gathered from all over the country. He often said afterwards that he had never in his life felt more intensely the power of these words from God: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be".

At first, it seemed as if Duff would only be able to say a few sentences. He could see that many were concerned for him; as they told him later, they were afraid that he would soon collapse onto the floor. As he went on with his address and warmed to his subject, he forgot the concern of his audience. He had set his aim high for India; it was the conversion of its 130 million people. He well knew that he could not achieve this by himself, even with the help of the few other Europeans already in the field. He particularly looked forward to the time when Indian ministers would be preaching the gospel to their own people; it would, he said, be a glorious day. After all, they could speak much more effectively to their own people than foreigners.

In the course of his speech Duff addressed the argument that there was plenty gospel work to be done at home; so "why roam for more in distant lands?" Those who argued like this, he strongly suspected, were "the very men who do little, and care less, either for heathen at home or heathen at a distance". If the Apostles had thought in this way, "they would never have crossed the walls of Jerusalem" to go out to the Gentiles with the gospel. In fact, as he told the Assembly, his wish was that far more would be done both at home *and* abroad.

Many, even among the Moderates, were very deeply moved by his address. But when Duff sat down, he realised that he was soaked in sweat – it was, to use his own expression, as if he had been dragged through the Atlantic Ocean. Although he was still unwell, he had poured out his whole soul in the hope that many in his native Scotland would take an increasing interest – an increasingly prayerful interest – in the gospel work that had started in India, the country now so close to his heart.

Contentment

Contentment is a precious jewel that very few people possess. It is rare even among the Lord's people. But the Bible often exhorts us to be content with our situation in life, and the Apostle Paul is certainly a good example when he says: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). We know that he toiled and suffered persecution for the Lord Jesus' sake, but he had his eyes on better things – on eternal joys.

The other day I phoned Mrs Andrade, an elderly, godly believer in Brazil. She had been having serious problems with her health but, when she answered the phone, I was pleasantly surprised to hear a very happy voice at the other end of the line. Although she does not have many of the good things of this life, she is a cheerful person. But that day she sounded more cheerful than usual.

Soon I was able to find out the reason for her cheerfulness. On that day one neighbour had given her two eggs, another had offered her a little flour. As she had some margarine, she decided to bake herself a cake. She told me that, as she sat down to eat it, she praised God for His goodness to her. She thanked Him for friendly neighbours, for the improvement in her health which allowed her to enjoy that piece of cake and for being spared in this world another day – when so many pass into eternity each day.

But, above all, she thanked Him for the "unspeakable gift" of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. She said that she wondered at God's goodness to people who must die: He sent His only Son to this sinful world to live and to die a painful and humiliating death, so that sinners could be at peace with the holy God and enjoy eternal life with Him. She praised Him for the gift of saving faith – for without it she would not benefit from the death of the Lord Jesus. She said that she could think of so many of God's mercies that, as she gave thanks to Him, she felt overwhelmed with joy. And as she ate the cake which God had provided for her, she thought it was the most delicious cake she had ever eaten, even though it was a plain sponge cake without a filling or anything else in it.

The Puritan minister Matthew Henry wrote about the truly blessed state of a godly man, because even "if he has but a little, he has it from God's love and with His blessing". He also says that, to the godly, "enough is as good as a feast". Certainly that was the case with Mrs Andrade.

How different from the worldly society of the days in which we are living. People who have many of the good things of this life never stop to think of God, the One who gives them everything they have. They never have time

for Him, not even to thank Him for all His goodness to them. But worst of all, they are never happy with their lot; they go on coveting more and more; they are never content.

You may live in a wealthy country and have more than you need. If so, are you thankful to the Lord for the good things of this life that you enjoy, or do you always wish to buy more when you go to the shops? The temptations of this world are indeed many. Paul compares covetousness to idolatry (Colossians 3.5), both of which are hateful in the sight of God. It is far better to take the counsel of Scripture and seek after godliness: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). *C Johnson*

The Sabbath Day

2. The Sabbath and the Law of Moses

Rev Donald Macdonald

The first part of this Youth Conference paper dealt with the Sabbath and Creation.

We refer now to the revelation of the law given to the Jews through Moses at Mount Sinai. These commands were given to regulate man's life; they dealt with his duty both to God and to other people. The Ten Commandments, as given in Exodus 20, are a summary of God's law which was written on tables of stone by the finger of God.

We should notice that the law was written on man's heart in his creation, in his state of innocence. Man's will was then in submission to the will of God, and his emotions were holy and pure. Robert Shaw, an old Scottish minister, wrote of God's law: "It was engraven on the heart of man in fair and legible characters". The command to "remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy" was clearly written on man's heart at his creation.

God wrote His law on tables of stone and gave it to the Israelites, not because man was righteous, but because he became a sinner. The law of Moses was part of the covenant God made with the Children of Israel after they came out of the land of Egypt; so the Sabbath day, as connected with the Old Testament form of the worship of God, had a ceremonial side to it. The ceremonial regulations were to pass away when the new covenant was established with the coming of Christ. These were the ceremonial regulations so abused by the Scribes and Pharisees in the days of the Saviour on earth, as when they objected to the disciples plucking the ears of corn (Mark 2:23). The Saviour laid down that He, as the Son of man, was Lord of the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was made for man – not man for the Sabbath. Although

the ceremonial aspects of divine worship were abolished, the Saviour neither abolished nor relaxed the law of the Sabbath which is enshrined in the Ten Commandments. On the other hand, the Sabbath is confirmed in the prophetic writings. (See Isaiah 58:13-14, for example.)

We should notice the preface to the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out . . . of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). The Creator, who sanctified the Sabbath Day at the beginning, was the deliverer of His people. They were a redeemed people and, on receiving the law, they were to remember that the God of creation is the God of redemption. He became their deliverer, and the Sabbath day was to be kept holy on that account.

The mighty acts of God were involved in that deliverance; they led up to the giving of the law at Sinai. He first revealed His tender mercies in that deliverance; then He revealed Himself: "I am the Lord thy God". Glen Knecht, a present-day writer, points out that God's law shows us what God sanctifies: His name, His worship, His day, the family, property, human life, truth itself, and the singleness of the human heart are all set apart for His glory. Knecht goes on to say, "The Commandments are hedges around the sacred things of God, as well as pointers to what He is truly like".

Let us make two final points at this stage. The first is that the Lord's Day belongs to the Ten Commandments. It is one of ten laws which are all to be kept before the Lord. Another writer on the Sabbath says, "I submit that, being there, it must stand or fall with the others". What he is saying is simply that you cannot pick and choose the laws you want to keep and then forget about those that do not fit in with your own ideas. You cannot say, for example, that the first three commandments are binding on you and then suggest that the fourth stands on a different basis. How can you say that this law is not binding on you and therefore you will have none of it? The Ten Commandments form "a unity. To eliminate one is to eliminate all. To admit one is to admit all." (See James 2:10.)

The second point is where the Sabbath is placed among the Ten Commandments. This position did not happen at random; it was not arranged by chance. There is nothing of chance in any arrangement that God makes; He is the God of order. He is the author of prophecy, indeed of all revelation. So He has ordered the position of the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments. It is not placed at the beginning, nor is it placed at the end. Someone has said that it is "like the keystone of an arch; it is buttressed on either side by well-chosen and well-fitted stones; and itself, while supported by them, gives them in return their strength. Was it all undesigned? Has it all come about by chance? If we were dealing with a work of man, we might say so. But

this is a work of God." The Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, were produced by a designing mind. (See Exodus 31:12-18, 32:15-16.) This is the writing of God, and the finger of God.

For Younger Readers

“Who Would See You?”

She was just a little girl. But she could say the whole of Psalm 23, from the beginning to the end.

Some kind man thought she did very well. And so she did. He gave her a shilling (it is worth perhaps about £5 now). She was very pleased to get it. She held the coin very tightly in her hand. Perhaps no one had ever given her so much money before.

Her father was afraid she might think of going to spend her shilling on Sabbath. There were lots of shops open on Sabbath where they lived. He told her: “I won’t be with you to see you. But there is One who will see you and find out at once if you break the Sabbath day.”

“Who would see you?” he asked her. He expected her to say, “God”, because God sees everything. And God tells us: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”. It is His day and we are not to do on a Sabbath what we can do on other days. The girl could spend her money on other days, of course. But the Sabbath is for learning about God and going to church and things like that.

What do you think the girl said to her father? She told him: “Myself will see me”. And she would know it was wrong.

I hope she always thought like that. I hope she always wanted not to do wrong. I hope she always wanted to keep the Sabbath. And I hope that to know Psalm 23 helped her.

The Psalm begins: “The Lord’s my shepherd”. It means that God will always take care of those who follow Him. Have you learned this Psalm? Here is the first verse to start you off.

The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green: He leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

For Junior Readers – Lessons from the Life of John G Paton

More Difficult Decisions

John's mission work in Glasgow continued to make good progress. Many more people were coming to his meetings. He was also having more meetings. But although there was this success, John still felt in his heart "the wail of the perishing heathen in the South Seas". (The South Sea Islands are off the north-east coast of Australia.) He was not sure if God really wanted him to go there as a missionary. Or was he just trying to live out some boyish adventure? Anxious to do the right thing, he continued to pray most seriously, asking God to guide him. But he did not speak to anyone about it.

After some time John felt that God was encouraging him to apply to be a foreign missionary to the people of the South Seas. It was a difficult decision for him to leave Glasgow, but others would be able to take over his work there. But he knew that nobody was willing to go as a missionary to the South Seas. Also, even if some of the meetings he had started had to close, there were plenty other places where these people could hear the gospel. But the people in the South Seas had no opportunities to hear about Christ, the Saviour of sinners.

Once John was accepted as a missionary to the South Seas, he had to do a year's training to prepare himself for the difficult situations he would have to face. He had to learn how to build a house, to identify sicknesses and how to treat them, and the basics of farming. During this year of preparation many people tried to persuade John that he ought to stay and continue his work in Glasgow, especially since he had seen such success, with many people being converted. They even gave him a generous offer if he changed his mind and stayed. He could have a house and any salary he would ask for. But he always refused such offers.

In an attempt to get him to change his mind, people often warned John about the cannibals he would meet. Mr Dickson, an old Christian, often spoke to John about this problem: "The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!" But John eventually silenced him with the answer: "Mr Dickson, you are advanced in years now and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms. I confess to you that, if I can but live and die serving and honouring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or worms." This answer shows how determined John was to serve Christ.

As the year went on, the people who attended his meetings continued to beg him not to leave. John was finally starting to doubt if he should go away.

So he wrote his parents and told them his concerns. They wrote him back, and their answer assured John that he was doing the right thing. They told him that from the day he was born they were sure he was to serve the Lord. They had asked God that, if it was His will, He would use John as a missionary. They had never told John about their hopes and prayers before because they did not want to influence him. They wanted him to be guided by the Lord to this decision. What wise parents he had!

Now John was happy. He felt he was doing the right thing before the Lord. And so he could pray for the Lord's blessing on his work and he could expect an answer. He continued to prepare himself for the work among the people of the South Sea Islands.

You can see that John had to make some tough decisions. But he did not make these decisions after just thinking about things himself. The first thing he did was pray to God, to ask Him for help to make the right choices. John also asked his parents for advice and listened to what they had to say. The Fifth Commandment encourages us to listen to our parents and to obey them. John had the advantage of having godly parents. And, if we have such parents, we should be thankful to God for this blessing.

John also stuck to what he thought was right, even although he received tempting offers of nice things: a house and a good salary. How often are you tempted to do what is not the best in order to get something you want: maybe a new pair of trainers, or a new bike? We all like to get new things and it is difficult to control this desire. But we must control it or else we are breaking the Tenth Commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not covet".

So the next time you ask your Dad and Mum for something new and they say, "Sorry, no!" then accept their answer in a good spirit and do not keep going back to ask them for it. They may have a good reason for the answer they give, even if you do not understand it at the time.

The Danger of Being Afraid of Others

J C Ryle

Another piece, slightly edited, from this noted nineteenth-century English minister. The fifth in a series on dangers to young people, it follows the article in February.

Another danger to young people is the fear of other people's opinion. "The fear of man" does indeed bring "a snare" (Proverbs 29:25). It is terrible to observe the power which it has over most minds, and especially over the minds of young people. Few of them seem to have any opinions of their own or to think for themselves. Like dead fish, they go with the stream and tide;

what others think right, they think right; and what others call wrong, they call wrong too. There are not many original thinkers in the world. Most people are like sheep; they follow a leader. If it was the fashion of the day to be Roman Catholics, they would be Roman Catholics; if it was the fashion to be Muslims, they would be Muslims. They dread the idea of going against the current of the times. In a word, the opinion of the day becomes their religion, their creed, their Bible and their God.

The thought, "What will my friends say or think of me?" nips many a good inclination in the bud. The fear of being noticed, laughed at, mocked, prevents many a good habit being taken up. There are Bibles that would be read this very day if the owners dared. They know they ought to read them, but they are afraid: "What will people say?" There are knees that would be bent in prayer this very night, but the fear of man forbids it: "What would my wife, my brother, my friend say if they saw me praying?" Alas, what wretched slavery this is, and yet how common!

"I feared the people," said Saul to Samuel: and so he transgressed the commandment of the Lord (1 Samuel 15:24). "I am afraid of the Jews," said Zedekiah, the graceless king of Judah, and so he disobeyed the advice which Jeremiah gave him (Jeremiah 18:19). Herod was afraid of what his guests would think of him; he did what made him "exceeding sorry" – he beheaded John the Baptist. Pilate feared offending the Jews, so he did what he knew in his conscience was unjust – he delivered up Jesus to be crucified. If this is not slavery, what is?

Young people, I want you all to be free from this bondage. I want you all to care nothing for man's opinion when the path of duty is clear. Believe me, it is a great thing to be able to say "No!" Here was good King Jehoshaphat's weak point – he yielded too much in his dealings with Ahab. And this was the cause of many of his troubles (1 Kings 22:4). Learn to say "No!" even if you are afraid of not seeming good-natured. When sinners entice you, say decidedly, "I will not consent" (Proverbs 1:10).

Consider only how *unreasonable* this fear of man is. How short-lived is man's enmity, and how little harm he can do you! "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be as grass: and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" (Isaiah 51:12,13). And how *thankless* is this fear! No one will really think better of you for it. The world always respects those most who act boldly for God. O break these bonds and cast these chains from you! Never be ashamed of letting people see you want to go to heaven. Do not think it a disgrace to show that you are a servant of God. Never be afraid of doing what is right.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Only try to please God, and He can soon make others pleased with you. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

Be of good courage. Do not care for what the world says or thinks; you will not be in the world always. Can man save your soul? No. Will man be your judge in the great and dreadful day of account? No. Can man give you a good conscience in life, a good hope in death, a good answer on the morning of resurrection? No, no, no! Man can do nothing of the sort. Then "fear not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings: for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool" (Isaiah 51:7,8). Call to mind the saying of good Colonel Gardiner: "I fear God, and therefore I have none else to fear". Go and be like him.

Such are the warnings I give you. Lay them to heart. They are worth thinking over. I am much mistaken if they are not greatly needed. The Lord grant they may not have been given you in vain.

A Complete Change

True religion had very little influence in Amherst College in America at the beginning of 1827. The students had to attend the Sabbath services but it would have been a complete surprise if anyone came to the weekday meeting who was not already known as a true Christian; it would have been something to talk about for the rest of the week.

One student had often been in trouble with the college authorities; to avoid confusion we will call him John. He was one of the most prominent in opposing religion and, because of his personality, he had a lot of influence over others. His was clearly a bad influence. During a revival in the area, the College President told a meeting of officials that John was very disturbed because of his sins. One of the officials was quite sure that John's concern was not genuine. He believed John was only pretending to be upset – wanting to deceive the President and make fun of him to amuse his friends. The President made no answer, but later he went to speak to the student. After his visit he was totally convinced of John's sincerity: "There's no pretence there. If the Spirit of God is not at work upon his heart, I know nothing about the agency of the Spirit."

What had happened? Most of the students were opposed to religion; they

lived ungodly, unbelieving lives. One Sabbath, when the President was preaching, John was sound asleep as usual. Near the end he wakened up – as if he had been disturbed by the silence. He did not know what the preacher’s text was; he did not know anything about his subject; he had gone straight to sleep. But it was clear to him that the sermon was having an unusual effect on the congregation; never before had he seen a body of people so engrossed in what they were hearing. And, while the preacher was perfectly calm, he was completely involved in what he was saying. His face indicated tremendous earnestness and his words came flowing out with great power.

The preacher hoped that a revival was near. He was making a serious appeal to the students to do nothing to interrupt its progress. They were to do nothing that would hinder the salvation of others even if they were still careless about their own souls. Many of the students left the service with an arrow in their conscience – among them some of the merriest and most reckless. It was expected that there would be resistance to any religious movement and John could have been expected to take a lead in this opposition. But, he wrote, “I resolved not to do it, but to let it take its course, keeping away from its influence, without doing anything to oppose it. But neutrality was impossible.”

Another young man, who was sharing a room with him, requested him to ask one of the tutors to hold a religious meeting in his room – but probably with a view to making mischief. John agreed, provided his roommate would get ten other students to promise to come, and he chose those he was confident would refuse. To his surprise they all agreed to attend. So, however reluctantly, he had no option but to make the request to the tutor.

Most of the students went in to the meeting completely hostile to religion, or else totally lighthearted in their attitudes. John’s room-mate was among the lighthearted ones, so the Bible he placed on the stand was in Hebrew. The tutor entered the room, began with prayer and then launched out on a convincing defence of the divine authority of the Bible. The talk had a powerful effect. Several went away deeply impressed; others left with at least some serious thoughts. So, as John noted, the affair “fell out rather to the furtherance of the gospel”.

John himself was becoming more serious. One day, alone in his room, he was “overwhelmed with conflicting emotions of pride and despair”. He was surprised to find the head of the College at his door. The President had come in the hope of persuading John to do nothing to hinder the revival. John told him that he had nothing to fear on that score and, with some difficulty, described to him how disturbed he felt. The President only replied, “I was afraid you would never have such feelings”. No one said anything for a few

minutes, and then the President prayed. He left at once, leaving John with the advice to attend a prayer meeting which some classmates were holding. John felt something like Naaman, who was so disappointed that Elisha had not performed some wonderful act to take away his leprosy.

John then went to speak to one of his fellow students, who was known as a consistent Christian. In tears, John asked him to tell him what to do to be saved. This student too showed his surprise and tried to pray with John. But he could only say, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us". He told some other students that evening that John's question about the way of salvation made him feel as if he needed to learn it himself.

College classes went on as usual. Though John seems to have been a student, he was also taking maths classes. In these classes, even some of those who were still unconverted were too much moved to answer his questions. Some students who had once been prominent enemies of God and of religion were sitting still with their heads leaning on the seats in front of them and tears in their eyes. One day, everyone was so serious that the class could not go on. It was pointless to ask the students to answer questions on maths; no one could say anything. So they prayed together to God "to come and be with us and bless us, and to save us and our class-mates from sin and suffering", and then they went to their rooms in silence. That week, John wrote, "the students loved to be alone. They walked about silently. They said little when they met Late in the evening they would collect in little circles in one another's rooms".

On Tuesdays and Thursdays there were services in the largest lecture room in the College. Once there had been only a sprinkling of students on the benches; now all the seats were occupied and others had to be brought in, as 150 students crowded into that one room. One evening the President preached on the verse: "Notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:11). Everyone sat in silence drinking in his words; their opposition had disappeared and their pride had been subdued. He emphasised the seriousness of their sins and pressed them to lay down the weapons of their rebellion against God.

When the first signs of revival appeared, only a fortnight of that term remained. Within ten days there was a complete change; open ungodliness among the students disappeared, with one or two exceptions. And about half the students professed to have been converted. Some years later John, by that time a minister, did not know of any of the professed converts who had gone back to the world. Such is the power of God to save even the rebellious and to keep them afterwards, and to put a restraint on those whom He does not save. And He has not changed.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2006-7

Overseas Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Liana Sullivan, David Thomas, Jessica van Kralingen. *Chesley:* Martha Bouman, Randy Winkels. *Gisborne:* Herman and Trudy Haringa. *Grafton:* Shelley van Dorp. *Holland:* Anne and Peter Bakker, Daniel van Draanen. *Queensland:* Miriam Brigden. *Sengera:* Bernard Mosoti, Lydia Momanyi. *Singapore:* Linus Lau Jun Ling. *Sydney:* Alison and Laura Marshall.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Sam McCrae, Samantha Muirhead, Jonathan van Kralingen. *Chesley:* Jenny Bouman, Rachel Winkels, Audrey Zekveld. *Dunedin:* Richie Worth. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* Louise van Dorp. *Grafton:* Matthew White. *Sengera:* Joan Abel, Jennifer Mosiria, Edinah Ombega, Steve Onchoka, Salome Ontiri, Janet Oriero. *Sydney:* Andrew Marshall, Madison van Praag.

Junior Section: *Auckland:* Laura McCrae, Amy Thomas. *Chesley:* Jacob Zekveld. *Dunedin:* Gresham Worth. *Gisborne:* Finlay Cramp, Anne-Marie Geuze, Heidi Haringa, Alexander van Dorp, Kirsten van Dorp. *Grafton:* Bethany McAlpine, Chelsie and Jackie Cameron, Chloe van Dorp, Abraham Wallis, Cameron White. *Holland:* Jelle Bakker. *Queensland:* Mary Brigden. *Sengera:* Vanic Aboki, Judys Kennedy, Kwamboka Nyasaka, Eusaphiah Ombega, Eglar Omone, Wilfred Omwonga. *Sydney:* James Marshall.

Upper Primary Section: *Auckland:* Bianca Jago, Lachlan McCrae. *Connecticut:* Rachel Mack. *Gisborne:* Muriel Cramp, William Haringa, Emma van Dorp. *Grafton:* Alexandra van Dorp. *Holland:* Gerben Bakker, Nathalie MacDonald. *Queensland:* Rachel Brigden. *Sengera:* Linet Angwenyi, Kerubo Batasi, Joel Kembene, Isaac Matoke, Dennis and Violet Michieka, Finlay Mogari, Vinicent Mokuu, Ericson Momanyi, Mary Mosoti, Nancy Nyambane, Abram Nyasaka, Andrew Obiri, Marube Obondi, Nchaga Obwocha, Dominic Ogoro, Seberio Omari, Julius Ombati, Vane Omweno, Nyaera and Wycliff Ondieki, Dickson and Nyaruri Ontiri, Stephen Onyancha, Jane Ouko, Eunuke Rafiki, Nehemiah Torori. *Singapore:* Julius Lau Jun Xi. *Sydney:* Keith Marshall, Emily van Praag, Heather van Praag.

Lower Primary Section: *Auckland:* Claudia and James Campbell, Rita de Bruin, Jarrod and Monique Jago. *Chesley:* Samuel Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Rebecca and Sarah Mack. *Gisborne:* Hannah Geuze, Anna and Annika van Dorp. *Grafton:* Christine and Joshua Kidd. *Holland:* Samantha and Thaddeus MacDonald. *Sengera:* Josinah and Rianah Aboki, Maera and Masai Batasi, Brian and Moses Barongo, Dolvin Boko, Janet David, Janet and Salim Isaac, Evans Julius, Dennis Juma, Nyangaresi and Thomas Kengere, Winnie and Yuniah Kerubo, Josephat Kombo, Christine Kwamboka, Geoffrey Magangi, Isaac and Nehemiah Matoke, Kevin and Purity Matongo, Jessy Mayra, Isabella Michieka, Dolvin and Hannah Mogendi, Edwin, Kwamboka and Nyaribo Mokoro, Daniel and Justine Mokuu, Truus Moraa, Alice Morang'a, Duncan and Peter Moses, Eucephier Moseti, Christine Mosoti, Christine, Edinah, Eric, Linet and Sisiria Nyabuto, Judis Nyachio, Vane Nyakwara, Jackson Nyambane, Moraa Nyasaka, Purity Obaga, Nyangaresi Obwocha, Bornface Okemwa, Cliffin Okioga, Albert Ombati, Dennis Ombongi, Justine Ombura, Brian and Nelson Omweno, Kerubo Omwoyo, Evans, Frider, Patrick, Vincent and Wilkister Ondieki, Brian and MacDonald Onduso, Andrew, Dennis, Dolphin, Edwin, Gesare, Linet and Nancy Orina, Isabella, Samuel and Ziporah Ontiri, Moffat Osoro, Haron and Vincent Pius, Brian Ratemo, Veronicah Thomas, Evans Torori, Dennis Zakayo. *Sydney:* Calum, Duncan and Hugh Marshall, Kaitlyn van Praag, Nathan and Zoe van Praag. *Wisconsin:* Calvin and Josiah Smith.

George Whitefield, the noted preacher said: "Come then, you little children, come to Christ; the Lord Christ shall be your righteousness. Do not think that you are too young to be converted. Perhaps many of you may be nine or ten years old, and yet cannot say, 'The Lord is our righteousness', which many have said though younger than you. Come then while you are young. Perhaps you may not live to be old. Do not stay for other people. If your fathers and mothers will not come to Christ, do you come without them."

Youth Conference 2007

Arrangements

Venue: Edinburgh Academy, Edinburgh.

Dates: Tuesday, April 3, to Thursday, April 5.

Chairman: Rev D A Ross.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: To Rev D A Ross, F P Manse, Laide, Ross-shire, IV22 2NB, *as soon as possible* (the closing date is March 23). See the February issue for an application form. The fee will be £36 for applicants in full-time employment and £18 for others. Cheques are payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Programme

Tuesday, April 4

- 2.30 pm **The Wise and Wealthy King**
Lessons from the Life of Solomon
by Rev W A Weale
- 7.00 pm **John Knox**
His Life and Legacy
by Rev H M Cartwright

Wednesday, April 5

- 9.30 am **Reliable Bible Translations**
The Need, the Difficulties and the Process
by Mr D P Rowland
- 1.30 pm **Church History in Edinburgh**
A Tour conducted by Rev D Campbell
- 7.30 pm **The Holy War** (part 2)
Conquered by Love, Overcome by Grace
by Rev Roderick MacLeod

Thursday, April 6

- 9.30 am **“As the Lord Commanded”**
How We Should Worship God
by Rev D W B Somerset

Further information will be sent to each applicant about a week before the conference. If you have any queries, do not hesitate to phone Mr Ross (tel: 01445 731340). But please do *not* delay sending in your application.