

The Young People's Magazine

**Issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland
Reformed in Doctrine, Worship and Practice**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” Ecclesiastes 12:1



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Cover Picture: A Kenyan elephant.

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Assuming too Much

John Flavel was an outstanding minister in Devon. In 1656 he moved to the seaport of Dartmouth and preached the gospel faithfully there, though his work was interrupted by periods of persecution. Some older readers will have his writings on their bookshelves; they run to six large volumes and are very much valued by those who know the worth of good spiritual reading.

Among Flavel's writings are more than 360 pages on the human soul. There he discusses 12 ways of losing one's soul. One of these is *presumption* – assuming what we have no right to assume. Flavel refers to three matters:

(1) Many assume they have saving grace when God knows that they do not. Flavel quotes Christ's words to Laodicea: "Thou sayest, I am rich . . . and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). He describes this as "a dangerous conspiracy between a cunning devil and an ignorant, proud heart to ruin the soul for ever". These people confuse saving grace with common grace – when God, without changing the heart, restrains sin – so, for instance, they read the Bible and go to church. They assume that, because they act in this restrained way, they are on their way to heaven. This is presumption.

(2) Many assume that their sins will be pardoned – although they do not come to Christ, although their hearts are not changed. But, as Flavel points out, all saving mercies come through Christ, the Mediator. "God is indeed a merciful God, and yet presumptuous sinners will find judgement without mercy" – because they do not seek mercy in the proper way, the way which God has appointed. This too is presumption. They think all will be well, but they are deceiving themselves.

(3) Many assume they will have plenty time for repentance in the future. They assure themselves that they will yet have many opportunities for seeking salvation, just as they had in the past. Flavel calls this a "snare of the devil". He recognises that young people do not want to have their sinful purposes interrupted by serious thoughts. And the idea that there will be plenty time in the future to seek salvation allows them to pursue their sins without feeling uncomfortable. This is Flavel's third example of presumption.

At this stage, Flavel focuses on this last example of presumption and goes on to make five points in an attempt to close off this “way to destruction”.

(1) He begs such young sinners, “whose feet are held fast in the snare of this temptation”, to think seriously about their position. Are they not old enough to be condemned to a lost eternity, although they think they are “too young to be seriously godly”? Flavel notes how many people died young. But although far fewer people die young today, no one has any right to assume that death is far away. Young people do die.

(2) If you knew the seriousness and the difficulty of salvation, “you would never think you could begin too soon”. Many people are sorry they were so late in starting to take religion seriously; no one was ever sorry for beginning too soon. Flavel warns us not to reply, “The penitent thief found mercy at the last hour”. Why not? Because “his conversion was extraordinary”. We must make use of the *ordinary* means God has given us, such as reading the Bible and listening to scriptural preaching. This thief, Flavel points out, is the only example in the Bible of a sinner who was converted so near the end of his life. This example is given, not to encourage presumption, but to prevent despair. If 10 000 people died of the plague and only one recovered, you would have no right to assume *you* would recover if you too were infected. Similarly, you have no right to assume you will be saved from your sins at the very end of your life, just because the Bible tells you about *one* such person. So you must not think it is too early to begin such a great work *now*.

(3) Others sought and found the Lord when they were younger than you, and you have not even begun to seek Him. There was “found some good thing toward Lord God” in the heart of Abijah (1 Kings 14:13) when he was just a young boy. Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth (1 Kings 18:12). Flavel asks, What excuses can you plead that they did not have? “Or what arguments and motives to godliness” did they have which you do not? And he comments: “Their seriousness shall condemn your vanity”.

(4) The first part of your life is the most suitable for the great work of finding salvation. Then, Flavel argues, “your hearts are tender” and more easily impressed; you are not yet distracted by the cares of adult life. He quotes the words of Solomon: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

(5) Flavel warns that, if you allow this best time in life to pass, it is highly unlikely you will ever be converted afterwards. How rare, he believed, are “examples of conversion in old age”! Long-continued habits of sin harden the heart, and it becomes very difficult to root them out. “Your ears then are so accustomed to the sounds of the world that *Christ* and *sin*, *heaven* and *hell*, *soul* and *eternity* have lost their awful sound” and their effects on you.

No one can tell in advance if you will reach the age of others in your family. The energy of youth cannot protect you from death. What madness then, Flavel exclaims, to risk your soul and eternal happiness on the possibility of living a long life! What if your presumption will fail you as it has failed millions of others? “Where are you then?” And, supposing you will have as much time as you hope for, will your hearts be as easily impressed then as now? “O beware of this sin of vain presumption!” exclaims Flavel again. And he closes by stating his belief that most of those who have gone to hell (from where the gospel is known) “owe their everlasting ruin” to this sin.

Flavel was noted for his loving and earnest preaching. Yet no doubt many of his hearers in Dartmouth ignored his solemn warnings; they presumed that they would have plenty more time to prepare for eternity. One of them was a lad of 15 called Luke Short. Soon after hearing Flavel preach on 1 Corinthians 16:22, he sailed to America, and settled in Massachusetts. He must have been a remarkable man; even at the age of 100, he was still strong enough to work on a farm. But he continued careless about his soul. One day he sat down in his field for a rest and thought on his long life. His mind went back to the days when he used to listen to Flavel preaching in Dartmouth. He clearly remembered the minister’s solemn warnings, spoken with such loving earnestness. In particular, he remembered the sermon on 1 Corinthians 16:22: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” – that is, let him be cursed at the coming of the Lord.

This sermon probably made a great impression when it was preached. But when Flavel was about to close the service with the benediction, he paused and asked, “How shall I bless this whole assembly, when every person in it who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ is Anathema Maranatha?” This solemn question went with such force into one man’s conscience that he collapsed on the floor. But Luke went on for another 85 years – till he was 100 – before the thought of being under God’s curse touched his conscience.

Perhaps the man’s collapse was what made Luke think of Flavel’s sermon all these years later. God blessed his thoughts; he realised that he had never yet begun to love the Lord Jesus Christ and so he was under this *Anathema* – God’s curse. Repentance followed conviction of sin. The old sinner found peace in believing and, to the end of his days – at the age of 116, it is said – he gave evidence of true godliness.

It is a wonderful story of God’s grace. But no one should presume that they will live to the age of 100. And, as Flavel warned, no one should presume that, in old age, after being immersed in sin for all those years, their heart is likely to be impressed by the Word of God. You dare not postpone seeking salvation till you are older. God tells you to seek Him *now*.

Samson

1. Set Apart to God from His Birth

Rev J B Jardine

This is the first part of a paper given at the 2008 Youth Conference. The paper was made as positive as possible. It would be helpful for you to read Judges 13-16.

Introduction. Samson was the name of the celebrated champion, deliverer and judge of Israel. He was remarkable for his supernatural physical strength, his moral failings and his tragic end. The name *Samson* is derived from a Hebrew word meaning "little sun". He was the son of Manoah, a man of the tribe of Dan, but his mother's name is not given in the Scriptures. Although many in Israel had gone away from God, Samson's parents were godly, and their religion was both humble and earnest. His native town of Zorah was one of the main towns of the western territory occupied by Dan.

Samson was a ruler in the days of the Judges, around 1200-1100 BC. The story of Samson is a faithful mirror of the time in which he lived. It was a time when there was no king or central government; each tribe was occupied with driving out their own enemies. For 40 years the Philistines had been allowed to oppress the children of Israel.

Samson was the last of the 12 judges sent by God whose lives are recorded in the Book of Judges. The title of *judge* cannot be taken away from Samson because of his sin. None of the previous 11 judges had a clearer or more direct call to the work of a judge than Samson. The details of his call are found in chapter 13, which records God's promise and its fulfilment in his wonderful birth. Samson is distinguished from the other judges who were before him: whatever he did to deliver his country from its enemies, he did without the help of others, through his own strength, which God had given him. Whatever he was called to do, he did as a result of either a direct revelation from God or the leadings of providence.

No matter how unbelievable many of the events of his life are to the modern mind, they are to be treated as historical facts, not as myths. The story of Samson has a distinctly-supernatural element, which must be received by faith. The historical facts of this story cannot be denied just because some may consider improbable the deeds which Samson performed. His acts were no more than we should expect from a deliverer whom God appointed and assisted. Some of the events in his life are hard to explain but that does not mean they are untrue. For a man whom God made strong, his actions are most certainly not impossible.

The times when Samson lived. The Ammonites oppressed Israel in the east and south of the country, and the Philistines, a powerful and hostile nation,

did so in the west. The name *Philistines* can be taken as meaning *strangers*. So it is easy for us to conclude that they were originally from a foreign country. Some consider they were among the “sea peoples” whose origins were around Crete and the Aegean islands. They were an uncircumcised people whose culture appears to have been less civilised than that of the other inhabitants of Canaan. Even today the word *Philistine* makes us think of a dull, stupid or uncultured person. The Philistines were, for a long period, the deadliest enemies of God’s chosen people. Their attacks against Israel began at the close of the period of the judges and lasted until the time of Hezekiah, though they became less serious during the time of David and Solomon.

At the time of Samson’s birth, the Philistines had conquered far into the land of Canaan. Open warfare between the Danites and the Philistines had now ended and the Danites were serving the Philistines. The whole of Danite society and its economy depended on the Philistine cities. Power was entirely in the hands of the Philistines, and the tribe of Dan was hopelessly weak. We see this when Samson’s native town and people could not shelter him and even the once-mighty tribe of Judah could not offer him a place of safety.

Samson’s character. Samson was the last judge before Samuel. He was gifted with supernatural strength as a Nazarite – someone dedicated to the Lord. He had an immense hatred for the Philistines, who had oppressed Israel for 40 years. So great was that hatred that he was willing to fight them alone. This champion of Israel was not appointed to lead an army, like the other judges, but to be an army in himself. The effects of Samson’s strength were used to arouse the overawed spirit of his people and shake the security of the Philistines.

At first glance we might be tempted to think that his motivation was no more than personal revenge; yet as a judge in Israel his motive was chiefly the good of God’s people. Samson was first and foremost a Nazarite and so fulfilled the law of the Nazarite as recorded in Numbers 6. In general terms, the Nazarite was to be a representative of Israel and an example to them. While under the Nazarite vow he stood under a special promise to God to keep from sin and to act according to the law of God. He was to show the people how they should deny themselves and govern their lives. If they, like him, fulfilled their covenant obligations then they would receive blessings from God.

This general principle was all the stronger in the case of Samson as he had been ordained to a be life-long Nazarite before he was born. He was chosen as God’s instrument to deliver Israel from degrading service to the Philistines. In Samson the self-denying ordinance of the Nazarite should have risen to

its highest point, as he was dedicated to God before his birth, while other Nazarites took the vow upon themselves. If the reality of his life fulfilled the promise involved at his birth, it would be a sign from heaven. In his life he would demonstrate, firstly, Israel's calling as the people set apart to serve God and, secondly, the conquering might that would be given to them if they stood faithful to their own duty to be holy to God.

Many of those who study Samson's life feel great concern about the contradiction they see between two matters. One is God's call of Samson and setting him apart to a holy life; the other is the way he actually lived his life. But to consider his character properly, we must consider him as a man of his own day, who must be judged to a large extent according to the standards of his time. When sin is widespread in society, it often affects the Lord's people, which is a warning for us today.

From the Scriptures, two distinct periods can be distinguished in Samson's life. The first was when he acted under the influence of the Spirit of God and the second when he yielded to his sinful lusts. It was while yielding to these lusts that he fell into sin, became unfaithful to his calling and denied the Lord.

Samson had supernatural strength. The Spirit of God in Scripture speaks of him as having this extraordinary power, which was the result of the special influence of the Lord. As Alfred Edersheim notes, "the influences of the Spirit of God upon Samson came upon him as impulses from without – sudden, mighty and irresistible". These influences showed themselves in an overpowering urge, which he could not resist – nor could others.

Two elements are at work in the life of Samson, the divine and the human; the Lord and Samson; the supernatural and the natural. They intertwine and act together, the Holy Spirit influencing the man, making Samson both earnest and patriotic. To him his Nazarene consecration was not a mere religious veil, but a living impulse, which gave him the honour of being both a Nazarite and a judge in Israel.

Samson's supernatural power and his position as a Nazarite are clearly connected. The connection of faithfulness to the Nazaritish vow with supernatural power (in the particular gift of great physical strength) was seen in no one except Samson. His story has no parallel in Scripture. When the Spirit of God came upon him, he performed supernatural actions, not in his own strength but, as a Nazarite, in the strength of God. God set him apart before his birth for Himself. All this showed the true meaning of being set apart as a Nazarite and showed Israel how great a deliverance God could work for His people through a single faithful individual, so that one man could "chase a thousand" (Deuteronomy 32:30).

Missionary to India

26. “My Heart Is Still in India”

Alexander Duff first reached India in 1830 and, over the years that followed, he established a significant mission work in Calcutta. After repeated bouts of ill health he returned to Scotland for the last time in 1864, when he took over leadership of the Free Church of Scotland’s mission work.

As Duff settled down in his own country, he could feel thankful for the money that was being collected for foreign missions. But what about the future? He was anxious that students for the ministry would spend some of their time learning about the Church’s duty to spread the true religion to the whole world. He was conscious that, when he himself was at St Andrews University nearly 40 years before then, preparing to become a minister, he had been taught nothing about the duty of the Church to carry the gospel to other parts of the world. He believed that, if the Church is a lamp, it ought “to give light not to itself only, but also to the world”. He argued that his Church should appoint someone to be a professor of missions.

In response to his proposals, Alexander Duff was himself appointed the first Professor of Evangelistic Theology, as the position was called. *He* was surprised to have been appointed; few others could have felt in the least surprised. His work involved giving a series of lectures every year, which he had to repeat in each of the three colleges, in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, where men were trained for the ministry of the Free Church.

While Duff served as Convener of the Free Church’s Foreign Missions Committee, three new mission stations were established in southern Africa, and a completely new mission in Lebanon. Indeed in 1870 Duff made a tour of the Middle East to examine various mission schools. And, not long before his time as Convener came to an end, his committee became responsible for the New Hebrides mission – where John G Paton was the best known of the missionaries. This was the result of the union of Duff’s Free Church with most of Paton’s Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1876. Indeed back in 1837 William Symington, a prominent Reformed Presbyterian minister in Stranraer, attended a meeting where Duff spoke. He was impressed with the missionary’s earnestness as he rebuked Christians for their lack of zeal to spread the gospel to all parts of the world. Symington ended that day’s entry in his diary: “I reckon it a great privilege to have heard and met with this great and good man. May it be blessed for increasing my zeal for the conversion of the heathen.” Soon afterwards Symington began collecting money for foreign missions.

In 1865 Mrs Duff became ill and died. Shortly afterwards Duff wrote to

one of his sons, who lived in India, and told him that his mother was now “one of the bright spirits that shine in white array in the realms above, where there is no night of ignorance or error or wandering, no more sorrow or crying or pain or tears, no more curse of a condemning law”. This was because “Christ the Lord [has] redeemed His own from the curse of the law and enabled them to triumph gloriously over the last enemy [that is, death] here below”. Duff had prayed that God would give him and his family simple submission to God’s holy will at that time. And he could say, “Our prayer has been wonderfully answered”. After his wife’s death, Duff gave himself more than ever to studying the Bible and some of the best books of theology.

In May 1876 Duff fell in his study, perhaps from a chair, onto his back and dashed his head badly on a desk. He was obviously badly shaken, because he did not leave his bedroom for some weeks afterwards. Then in July he became seriously unwell, and his illness left him out of action for a further two months. Yet the 70-year-old professor insisted on giving his lectures that winter as usual, but during his stay in Glasgow and Aberdeen he longed to be back in his own home in Edinburgh.

In fact, before his course of lectures in Glasgow ended, he had to return home for an operation. But he never really recovered his health. When his son returned to Scotland from India in early January 1878, Duff told him: “I am in God’s hands, to go or stay. If He has need of me, He will raise me up; if otherwise, it is far better.” He wished to be able to do more work for his Master in this world; his heart, he said, was “still in India”. He was anxious that every effort would be made to spread the gospel throughout the world, but clearly he had a special desire that the cause of Christ would make progress in India, where he had worked so hard for so many years. He had hoped to make another attempt to rouse the people of Scotland to do more for the cause of missions. But he knew it would be far better for him to get to heaven, to enjoy the immediate presence of God in a place where there is no more sin. Yet, as he approached the end of his life, he felt bitterly disappointed to be left with the feeling that his Church did not have a high enough view of the importance of the work of a professor teaching students about missions.

Duff had wanted to go on to do some more work in Christ’s kingdom on earth but, if that turned out not to be possible, he was, he told his son, “equally ready and willing to submit to any change which God in His infinite wisdom, goodness and love might be pleased” to bring about. After saying so, he was exhausted and whispered: “I am very low and cannot say much, but I am living daily, habitually in Him”.

A few days later, after being told what one of his doctors thought about his condition, he said, “I never said with more calmness in my life, continually

by day and by night, ‘Thy will, my God, my God, be done’”. And he added: “In my own mind I see the whole scheme of redemption from eternity more clear and glorious than I ever did”. About a fortnight later, on 12 February 1878, Alexander Duff’s soul left this world to enter heaven, where, with a greater understanding of Christ’s work of redemption than was ever possible in this life, he is praising God continuously.

A New Heart

3. Made Heavenly and Pure

George Burder

This sermon, slightly edited, is on words from Ezekiel 36:26: “A new heart also will I give you”. It was meant for children. In the last section the preacher showed that (1) we are born with a hard heart, but God can make it soft; (2) we are born with a proud heart, but God can make it humble. Burder was a minister in England around 200 years ago.

3 The heart is by nature *worldly*. All unconverted people are in Scripture called “men of the world” whose portion is in this life. They think only of the world; they speak only of the world; all their desires are worldly: “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (Matthew 6:31). Worldly people seek after all these things, and only after such things as these. In this case there is no heart for religion. “God is not in all their thoughts” (Psalm 10:4). For the sake of the world they neglect the gospel and lose their souls. They are “careful about many things”, like Martha, but they do not choose “the one thing needful” with Mary (Luke 10:41,42).

Now, this is a sad state to be in. If we love the world, the love of God is not in us (1 John 2:15). If we mind “earthly things”, so as to make them our chief good, our end will be destruction (Philippians 3:19). And are your hearts not worldly? Though you are not engaged in worldly business, yet your hearts love only the things of this world. Are not play and pleasure all you delight in?

Perhaps you do not like prayer. Either you do not pray at all in secret, or you satisfy yourselves with a few formal words which you have learned by heart, but you say them without feeling any desire after Christ and grace and salvation. When your parents pray in your family, as I hope they do, you do not pay attention to what is said. And when you are in the house of God, perhaps you do not listen to what the minister says, or you content yourself with just remembering the text.

But this is not religion. The worldly heart must be taken away, and you must have a heavenly, spiritual heart – one that delights in God and Christ, prayer and praise, in the Word of God and spiritual conversation. Blessed be God, there have been many such children; perhaps you have read of them in books. May the Lord make you like them so that you may live to God, if you are spared to live longer. And if He is to remove you from this world, may He make you fit for heaven.

4. The heart is by nature *wicked*; the Scripture says it is “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). And the Saviour says that evil thoughts, thefts, murders and many other bad things proceed out of the heart (Matthew 15:19). Now, you know they must be in someone’s heart, or they could not come out of it. Some people will tell you they have good hearts, even though they speak bad words and do bad things. But this is wrong. A good tree bears good fruit; and a sweet spring does not send forth bitter waters.

Everyone’s heart is wicked by nature, and if some people do not commit such wicked actions as others, it is not because their hearts are better by nature. It is because God would not let them become so wicked as they wish – just as people chain up wild beasts to keep them from destroying us.

You may see the truth of this in yourselves. You know how apt you are, or once were, to tell lies. Nobody told you how to tell lies. You did it naturally. Is that not a proof of having a wicked heart? Lying is a great sin; it is a work of the devil, who is “a liar, and the father of” lies. Lying is so hateful to God that He will not let any liars go to heaven; no one who loves or makes a lie can go there (Revelation 22:15). But God says, “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8). O pray to God to forgive you this great sin!

You may know that your hearts are wicked, if you become angry when someone stops you doing what you want. And anger is a degree of murder in God’s thinking (Matthew 5:22). But the wickedness of the heart appears most of all in its hatred of God, for Paul says, “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Romans 8:7). And have you not shown this in your dislike of religion, in breaking the Sabbath, in taking the Lord’s name in vain, in disobeying your parents and in many other ways?

See then how necessary it is to have a new heart, and the new heart is a pure heart. Jesus Christ says, “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Now the heart is “purified by faith” (Acts 15:9). When we see what a wicked heart we have, and are filled with grief and fear because of it, then we flee for refuge to Jesus Christ. Then God pardons our past sins for Jesus’ sake. He gives us His Holy Spirit to make us hate sin and fight against it, to make us want to know His will and love to do it. Pray

then, with David: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Remember that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

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

22. The Attack Continues

Last month we saw Paton in danger of death from an army of warriors. But he was praying to God. He looked again and saw they were all standing still. Then the warriors began to turn and march slowly away. God had again protected Paton.

Paton and his small band of faithful helpers had been delivered from the advancing army of warriors; yet they were not yet out of danger. But why did the warriors suddenly stop and change direction? They had decided to go and attack the villages of a chief called Manuman. This chief had been a friend to Paton, and Miaki and the other chiefs did not want him to come with his men and defend the missionaries. The warriors would return later for Paton.

That night some of Miaki’s men lay in ambush round the mission house. When Abraham went back to see if he could collect anything, he was quickly surrounded by these blood-thirsty savages. But they did not kill him; it was really Paton they wanted and they thought that, if they left Abraham alive, he would return with Paton. When Paton did not return they broke into the mission house and took what they wanted, destroying everything else.

The next day, the attack on the villages in Chief Manuman’s district continued; so Paton and his friends stayed in hiding around Nowar’s village. But that evening Nowar came to Paton to tell him that he must leave the village. If Paton did not leave, Nowar said, he and his people would be killed for protecting Paton. As darkness fell, Nowar’s son led Paton to a big chestnut tree, and told him to stay there till the moon rose.

What long, lonely hours Paton spent up that chestnut tree, hearing the noise of guns being fired in the distance, and the yells of savages! Yet Paton felt safe in the tree and very near to God. About midnight Nowar’s son came to collect him to take him to the shore, where he would meet the others. From there they could try to escape by boat to the other side of the island, where Mr and Mrs Mathieson lived. Paton followed Nowar’s son, praying to the Lord for His continued presence.

At the beach, Paton met up with his little group again. Several of Nowar’s men were there, including the man whose canoe they were to borrow. But there was one delay after another. First the man would not give them the

canoe; then he would not give them paddles; and then he would not let them leave. Their guides, whom they had hired to help them with the journey, then refused to go. Eventually they managed to set off, but once they left the shelter of the land they hit a stormy sea.

The waves smashed violently over the canoe. They frantically bailed out the water and paddled as hard as they could. Five hours later, as the sun was rising, they reached land, but exactly where they had left it that night! There was nothing for it but to make the journey to the Mathiesons across land.

Faimungo, a friendly chief from further inland, had been meeting some of the other chiefs. He came to look for Paton and found him and his little group sitting wearily on the shore. After some discussion, Faimungo was persuaded to lead Paton and his teachers through the forest to the Mathiesons' home. It would be a dangerous journey, with many different groups of warriors roaming around looking for Paton.

On their journey they met several bands of warriors, all threatening to kill Paton and his teachers. But no shot was fired and no axe was thrown. They were now very near to Faimungo's district, and had stopped for a rest at a deserted village, when all of a sudden a large group of strong warriors surrounded them. Faimungo tried to persuade Paton to leave, saying that he would talk to the warriors. But Paton knew that, as soon as they left Faimungo's protection, they would be attacked. A killing stone was thrown which grazed old Abraham's cheek. A club was raised to follow the killing stone, but somehow it missed its target.

The warriors circled the small group round and round, in a deadly ring. Each warrior was urging the other to be the first to strike a blow or to fire his gun. One by one, Faimungo's men left and ran off into the forest. Paton persuaded Abraham and his wife and the other Aneityumese teacher to follow them. Only Faimungo and Paton were left.

At last, leaping out of the circle, Faimungo ran into the forest and Paton followed hard on his heels. He was praying to God to protect him or to take him home to glory. The band of warriors ran alongside the two men, on either side. Paton just kept running, committing everything to the Lord, and acting as if the warriors were his escort. Why did they not attack Paton? The only reason Paton could give was that the Lord kept them from doing so, just as He had stopped the lions from attacking Daniel.

They came to a stream, and the others in Paton's party cleared it with a leap. Paton tried to jump the stream too, but he did not quite make it. He slipped down the bank back towards the stream. As he did so, there was a crash above his head in the branches of an overhanging tree. A killing-stone had been thrown, but the branch saved him. Praising God, he scrambled

back up the bank and quickly followed the others. The enemy warriors gazed after him in silence. They did not cross the stream, nor did they throw any other weapons at him.

He found his party a little further on, resting in the bush – amazed that he was still alive! They went on with their journey, keeping off the main pathways to avoid other groups of warriors. Faimungo led them close to the shore and then told them he would go no further. He left three of his men with Paton to go a little farther with them. Then, if they followed the shore, they would eventually reach the Mathiesons.

Once again the Lord had preserved Paton’s life. Paton had many times asked God to protect him, but he did not assume that God would always answer him in exactly the way he wanted. No one naturally wants to die, yet Paton did not want life at all costs. After he prayed for protection he added the words: “or take me home to glory”. He also desired to go to heaven. He knew he would go there at the time ordered by God; he just did not know when that would be.

We often hear people saying in prayer: “If it be Thy will”. What they mean is: “We would like this to happen, but we know that it might not be for God’s glory; we only want it if God wills it”. We need to ask God to help us pray in this way and accept that what He does is for the best – even if, at that point in time, it does not seem best to us. This is called submitting to God’s will, and it is not easy. We should be like the people of Decapolis, who said about Jesus, “He hath done all things well”. You can read why they said this in Mark 7:31-37.

S M Campbell

For Younger Readers

“Make the Lord Jesus Your Friend”

The girl was just seven. She thought she was a very good girl. She said her prayers every morning and every night. If she was sometimes angry and disobedient, she was not worse than the other girls she knew. That was what she thought. But God knew she was not good.

One day she and a grown-up friend went to visit an old woman. The two grown-ups spoke for a long time about the Bible and religion. The girl wondered why they wanted to talk about these things. When they finished talking, the old woman said to the girl, “Make the Lord Jesus your friend now and, when you come to be

as old as I am, He will never leave you". These were good words.

God used these words to make the girl think. As she walked home with her friend, she did not speak. She was thinking how she could have Jesus to be her friend. She remembered how, till now, she did not bother about Jesus. When her minister preached about Jesus, she did not find it interesting; she longed for the sermon to be finished. She would say her prayers without thinking of what she was saying. She could spend days – even weeks and months – without thinking about Jesus. She loved her books, her toys and her friends better than Jesus.

She realised that all this was sin. Do you remember reading in this Magazine two months ago that sin is what we do wrong against God? This girl saw that she was doing wrong against God; she saw that she was a sinner. There was not one good thing in her.

It was God that showed her all this. And she knew now that she deserved that God would cast her away from Him for ever.

She asked herself some questions: Would Jesus love her now? Would He ever forgive her? She was afraid not, but she was going to try hard to please Him. She was going to try very hard and then, she thought, perhaps Jesus would be her friend.

But the more she tried to be good, the more she knew she wanted to do bad things. So she had to stop trying to make herself good. No girl can ever make herself good. Nor can any boy. It is only God who can make anyone good.

Many nights she was crying as she prayed to Jesus. What was she praying for? She was asking Him to teach her how sinners could be pardoned, and how she could have Jesus as her friend.

God made her want to read the Bible. As she did so, she found things that encouraged her – though there were lots of things she did not understand. One day she read the words of John 1:29: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". She wanted something to take away sin, and now she found out what can take away sin.

She asked her father to explain this verse to her. (You can find out a little about this verse if you look in last month's Magazine.) How happy she was when she could say that Jesus was her friend

and that her sins were taken away. God taught her that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin.

You must ask God to teach you these things too and to make Jesus your friend.

The Eye of Faith

C Johnson

Amelia was an ordinary woman who came to know the Lord Jesus as her Saviour. She had a son Pedro, who was a very wayward young man. He would mock her faith and, although she invited him to go with her to church, he went on in his sinful ways.

The Lord gave Amelia a lot of patience; so she was able to go on dealing with Pedro, and every day she would spend a long time praying for his soul. This did not seem to make any difference at all, and he persisted in his sinful lifestyle. Although his godly mother found his behaviour painful, he showed no wish to change it.

But one day he decided to go to church with his mother. That day he heard of the sinful ways of man and of the holiness of God. He heard of the love of God to sinners and of His gift to them in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit opened his eyes, so that he recognised his sinfulness, and from that day onwards he started to think of where he would spend eternity. He continued to go to church and became interested in what the minister had to say about the way of salvation. He heard that the only way to be saved – the only way to secure his eternal happiness – was through faith in the Son of God. Jesus Christ was holy and without sin; yet He died so that any sinner who believed on Him would have his sins forgiven.

Now this is a wonder, is it not? Those who come to Christ to have their sins forgiven are accepted by God as if they had never sinned. How can this be? Only because the Lord Jesus has endured the punishment due to the sins of those who come to Him by faith. What love for sinners! May we never lose sight of this amazing and blessed truth.

After some time, the Holy Spirit persuaded and enabled Pedro to receive the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. Because of the Spirit's work in his heart, Pedro changed his way of life and developed a taste for spiritual things. He began to think of his former ways and to feel sorry for how he had grieved his mother. One day he asked her if she hadn't been ashamed of the way he used to dress. She answered him: "No, my son! Whenever I looked at you it was

with the eye of faith, and I would see you wearing a suit and having the Bible in your hand, teaching sinners about the way to heaven. This was my prayer to God, and I knew that He would give me the desire of my heart, because He is a faithful God.”

Now this was strong faith indeed. Amelia had read in the Word of God that He delights in answering the prayers of the righteous and that He gives to them liberally. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it”, He says in Psalm 81:10. She opened her mouth and asked for the salvation of her son’s soul. Then she opened it wider and asked that the Lord would use him for His glory, that he would become a preacher of His Word – thus using him to enlarge His kingdom on earth. The Lord promises to give us good things in abundance: “That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures” (Proverbs 8:21).

And so it is now: Pedro has been given a love for lost souls. He has become a minister and is now teaching the poor about Jesus in the suburbs of São Paulo, one of the biggest cities in the world. He prays that they would find the “Pearl of great price” and become spiritually rich.

How often we faint in spite of the precious promises of God, such as: “Ask, and it shall be given you”. Nothing is too much for God to give to His children. We pray for the conversion of our children, and that is right. But do we ask that they would do great things for Him? Do we pray that they would be mightily used by God? And what about the rest of our family, our neighbours and the people with whom we come into contact daily? May we be like the Syrophenician woman, of whom Jesus said, “Woman, great is thy faith”.

If we read on in Psalm 81, we see that people in Israel did not want to open their mouth wide, because they did not want to follow God’s ways. If God does not do great things for us, it is because we do not ask. We know that He is always willing to give. Let us then pray for a faith that would remove mountains. May we come to prayer strengthened by the Holy Spirit. May we lay hold of Christ and leave our petitions in His care – knowing that He will answer them.

But what about you? You may say that you come to Christ and ask Him to take care of your soul, but do you expect Him to do it? Or do you ask half-heartedly, fearing that if He answers your prayer you will have to follow the narrow way? Ask Him for faith, and He will give it to you. He is still calling you; the way of salvation is still open. But you should ask yourself if the following verses in Psalm 81 describe you: “My people would not hearken to my voice So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust” (Psalm 81:11-12).

The World

John Newton had lived an ungodly life, seeking to find pleasure in the world and away from God. He was a seaman before God found him and drew him to Himself. He realised that the world does not give lasting enjoyment and, after he was converted, he became a noted minister. Ebenezer means "stone of help" and reminds us of Samuel saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12).

See, the world for youth prepares,
Harlot-like, her gaudy snares!
Pleasures round her seem to wait,
But 'tis all a painted cheat.

Rash and unsuspecting youth
Thinks to find thee always smooth,
Always kind, till better taught,
By experience dearly bought.

So the calm, but faithless sea
(Lively emblem, world, of thee)
Tempts the shepherd from the shore
Foreign regions to explore.

While no wrinkled wave is seen,
While the sky remains serene,
Filled with hopes and golden schemes,
Of a storm he little dreams.

But ere long the tempest raves,
Then he trembles at the waves;
Wishes then he had been wise,
But too late – he sinks and dies.

Hapless thus are they, vain world,
Soon on rocks of ruin hurled,
Who admiring thee, untried,
Court thy pleasure, wealth or pride.

Such a shipwreck had been mine,
Had not Jesus (name divine!)
Saved me with a mighty hand,
And restored my soul to land.

Now, with gratitude I raise
Ebenzers to His praise;
Now my rash pursuits are o'er,
I can trust thee, world, no more.

John Newton

Looking Around Us

New Invention Lets Blind Woman See

A blind woman from the USA has had a newly developed “bionic” eye implant fitted at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. For the first time in 10 years she was able to see. She was delighted, for example, to be able to watch her grandchildren playing. “It’s wonderful”, she said.

The invention consists of a tiny video camera mounted on one of the legs of a pair of glasses. The images it captures are transmitted to an artificial retina and thence to the brain, which reconstructs the image in pixels similar to those on a computer screen. Yet, although the invention, known as the “Argus II Retinal Implant”, is wonderful, the pictures it produces are blurred. The woman who watched her grandchildren play could only make out indistinct images of motion, light and darkness.

This degree to which the blind woman’s sight has been restored, although much appreciated, is really nothing in comparison to what Jesus did when He gave blind people their sight. “Receive thy sight”, He said to one blind man on the road to Jericho. Then, as the Bible tells us, “immediately he received his sight”. Happy day for that man! How glad he must have been as there and then he “glorified God” and “followed Jesus in the way”.

Even more wonderful is the opening of the eyes of the understanding of a sinner when he is converted. Every true Christian has had “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” enter his heart. In other words, as the *Shorter Catechism* says, he has had his mind enlightened “in the knowledge of Christ” – and this is the best happiness!

Ask God to open your own eyes, if He has not already done so. David the psalmist prayed, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law”. Is it not a most suitable prayer for you to use? *NMR*

Ruth: Her Story for Today

Rev Keith M Watkins’s articles on the Book of Ruth first appeared in this Magazine. They are now available as an attractive 288-page hardback costing £9.50. Many will welcome the opportunity to read these fine explanations of this part of Scripture. Particularly useful is the application of the teaching which appears throughout the book; it is highly relevant to the situations in which young people especially find themselves today.

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