

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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Ahab's Opportunity

Several wicked kings had ruled Israel since Jeroboam first led them away from the true worship of God. But King Ahab went much further in sinning against God. He married Jezebel, a daughter of the King of Zidon, a heathen country. They led Israel in worshipping Baal, a false god. This was specially provoking to the Lord, the one true God. Indeed "there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (1 Kings 21:25).

Very near Ahab's palace in Jezreel there was a vineyard owned by a good man named Naboth. Ahab set his heart on getting the vineyard for himself; he wanted to make it into a garden of herbs and thought that he could do a deal with Naboth. He was willing to pay for it or else give Naboth a better vineyard in exchange. Just one thing stood in the way – God's law, which said, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is Mine" (Leviticus 25:23). It was really God who owned the whole land of Israel, rather than individuals like Naboth or even the King; this was why no part of the land was ever to be sold. Naboth wanted, above everything else, to keep God's law; he loved God and so he loved God's law.

But Ahab did not love God; so he did not care about God's law. And he was not at all pleased at Naboth's answer. He went home in a sulk; he lay down on his bed, turned his head away and would not eat.

Jezebel naturally wanted to know what was wrong. Was Ahab not King of Israel? she asked him, after he explained what had happened. She told him to get up and eat and be merry. She promised to get him Naboth's vineyard. And she did. She ordered those who administered the law in Jezreel to make false charges against Naboth, to condemn him and stone him to death.

After Jezebel heard that they had done so, she told her husband that Naboth was dead. With Naboth out of the way, he felt free to take over the vineyard. Probably Ahab wasted no time in making it his own. But God saw all this deceit and wickedness and sent the prophet Elijah to accuse Ahab of his sin. Very likely Ahab's conscience was already troubling him; as they stood in the vineyard, he asked Elijah: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" He

considered Elijah his enemy because he was an enemy of Elijah's God.

Elijah brought a fearfully solemn message: Ahab and all his family would be killed. God was pronouncing this punishment against Ahab because of a whole series of sins, but particularly because he had taken advantage of Jezebel's plan to murder Naboth. Ahab reacted to Elijah's words with a kind of repentance. He tore his clothes; he wore sackcloth, a rough fabric; and he fasted – all outward signs that he was sorry for his sins.

How did God treat Ahab now? He postponed the punishment. So Ahab had an opportunity to seek salvation from God, to seek forgiveness for all his many sins. He had an opportunity to prepare to die.

But what is repentance? One really good answer comes from the *Shorter Catechism*: "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience" (answer 87). What does this mean? Various things are said about the sinner who repents. Such a sinner knows that what he has done is sin against God, and that it is extremely serious. But he also has a sense that God is merciful – because of what Christ Jesus did in suffering for sinners – and so He is willing to receive sinners. This sinner is now sorry for his sin and hates it. He is resolved now to obey God's law in a new way and he sincerely tries to do so.

Did Ahab have this kind of repentance? No, he did not. How can we be sure? Because when someone spoke about Micaiah, another of God's prophets, Ahab answered, "I hate him". He had the same attitude to Micaiah as to Elijah; they were still his enemies because he was still an enemy to God. Ahab's was not sincere repentance; his heart remained unchanged; he had not turned to God with all his heart.

Yet Ahab must have given up some of his sins; we are told that "he went softly". He did not rush on in sin as before; he was more careful. That was all good. But Ahab still loved his sin; he did not really want to give it up. He did not love holiness; he was not earnest to do what was right before God. He was not asking God to teach him to do what is right. He did not pray: "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me" (Psalm 25:4,5). He did not do so because he never really felt the authority of the true God. He never felt he needed God's help. He never felt he was a guilty sinner who deserved to be punished by God for ever.

Ahab may have restrained himself in his worship of Baal, but he never began to worship God in the way revealed in the law of Moses; he never went up to God's temple in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices for sin. He never believed the testimony of God as to how He is to be approached. There must have

been some kind of change in Ahab's life, but there was no change in Ahab's heart. And perhaps even his going softly did not last for long. There was no true repentance.

Ahab provoked God to leave him in his idolatry and all his other sins. And whatever our sins may be, it is very dangerous to provoke God to leave us in them. We may be restrained from many sins, but we are in serious danger if we do not sincerely turn from them all, in true repentance.

Ahab was given a wonderful opportunity to turn from his sin, but he did not really grasp it. Yes, he went softly, but he did not make a proper use of his opportunity; he did not sincerely seek God's favour. He did not submit to the authority of God; he probably thought of Him as a hard taskmaster; he probably did not really believe that he could be happy in a life of holiness. He knew what was right, but he did not really want to *do* what was right. It is very dangerous to act like Ahab and trample on one's conscience.

If you are still unconverted, you may think you can satisfy God by walking softly. But that is not enough. You must make *full* use of your present opportunity; you must turn your back, not just on some sins, but on all your sins. You must turn to God in sincere repentance. That includes grasping the fact that He is merciful, that He has made a merciful provision for sinners in Christ Jesus. So you must make good use of your present opportunity and seek the Lord "while He is to be found" – that is, *now*. You must call upon Him "while He is near" – that is, before your opportunity comes to an end and you pass away from this world into eternity.

God in His goodness is giving you this continued opportunity to seek Him. Paul asks, "Despise thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). Paul is referring to God's goodness in continuing your opportunity for seeking salvation, and he makes it plain that, if you do not make good use of your opportunity, you are despising God's goodness. Do you not know, Paul is asking, that God's goodness is designed to lead you to repentance? If you are not turning to God in sincere repentance, you are despising His kindness. And that, surely, is a very serious sin.

What happened to Ahab? He went out to fight in a battle, and a soldier in the other army "drew his bow at a venture" – he was not shooting at anyone in particular. But the arrow hit Ahab, and it was the cause of his death. God was in control of the arrow; He was bringing Ahab's opportunity to an end. Ahab had despised God's goodness, and now, solemnly, he had to face the consequences of all his sins in a lost eternity.

Make the most of *your* opportunity. Seek the Lord, and seek Him now. Seek Him earnestly. Seek Him urgently. You do not have a moment to waste.

A New Heart

2. Made Soft and Humble

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. Burder was a minister in England around 200 years ago. In the first part the preacher explained what is meant by *heart* – the mind and spirit. It is bad; that is why we need a new heart.

I shall now explain to you what is meant by this gracious change – being born again. I will describe both the old heart, which God takes away, and the new heart, which God gives.

1. The heart is by nature *hard*; the words after the text compare it to a stone, something that feels nothing. The heart of man by nature has no feeling – that is, no feeling for spiritual things. Someone who has no grace may be kind to other people; he may "weep with them that weep", but he may pay no attention to what God says to him in the Bible.

The Bible tells us that we are all lost and ruined sinners; it tells us that the wrath of God abides on us if we do not believe; it tells us that God is angry with the wicked and will turn them into hell. But how few people take any notice of this! They eat and drink and enjoy themselves, even on the Lord's day, as if nothing was wrong. Now, is this not because their hearts are hard?

If you were to see a judge condemn a murderer to die, and if the murderer was to remain unmoved or even laugh in the judge's face, you would think he had a very hard heart. Now, this is the case of every sinner. Is it not how you are? You are "by nature children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3), but when were you concerned about it? You would cry and be very sorry if your parents were angry with you and threatened to put you out of the house and never see you any more. But how much worse would it be if God should say to you, "Depart from Me, you cursed one, into everlasting fire" (see Matthew 25:41).

The hardness of the heart also appears in this: it is not melted with the goodness of God. How good God is to us all! He makes the sun to shine, the flowers to bloom, and the corn to grow. It is He who gives us food each day, and rest each night. And His goodness should lead us to repentance. Also He has "so loved the world", wicked as it is, "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And He has sent ministers to us with the glad tidings of this salvation. They warn us to flee from the wrath to come; they invite us to be reconciled to God.

But how hard is the heart that remains unmoved with all this goodness!

What would you think of a child who treated a dear father, or a kind mother, with neglect and scorn, after they had spoken to him kindly? Would you not think him very wicked? Well, this is how sinners treat the blessed God.

Have you not done so? It is God who has led and fed you all your days. He gave you kind parents and friends to care for you when you were infants, or you must have starved to death. He gives you clothes and food and health and pleasure and friends. And He does more: He gives you His gospel; He sends you the message of salvation; He gives you opportunity to read it and hear it and learn it. But what have you done to Him in return for all His goodness?

May your hearts melt in godly sorrow for sin! May the Lord give you “the heart of flesh” – the soft heart, the feeling heart which trembles at His word and fears the Lord and His goodness (Isaiah 66:2, Hosea 3:5). Then you will be afraid of the smallest sin; you will avoid all bad company; you will not dare to take the name of the Lord in vain; you will not play on the Lord’s day; nor will you behave badly to your parents or anyone else. And if you have this soft heart, you will be very sorry for your sins; you will be sorry to think you have offended God, and sorry to think that the blessed Jesus should suffer such shocking pains as He did for your sins.

2. The heart is by nature *proud*; but the new heart is humble. As God’s creature, man has no reason to be proud. As a sinner, he has much less reason to be proud. Yet we are all born proud. No one was ever born without a proud heart, though some people do not show it so much as others. You children know how apt you are to be proud of new clothes and other things; and how fond you are of showing them to others. As people grow up, they grow prouder – proud of beauty, riches, or learning – indeed, proud of being religious.

So you read of the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray. With monstrous pride he stood by himself and said, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are . . . or even as this publican” (Luke 18:11). Then he boasted of his good works, but God hated this proud man. Yet He looked in mercy on the poor publican, the man whom the Pharisee despised. This man’s heart was broken for sin; he had nothing to say for himself except: “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13).

Even children are proud of their religion; they will boast of being better than their brothers and sisters; they love to tell of their brothers’ and sisters’ faults and of their own goodness. Children, why do you hope to go to heaven? Is it because you are not so bad as others? Is it because you say your prayers and go to church? If so, you are proud, proud of your own righteousness, which the Bible calls “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Now, who would be proud of filthy rags? But the righteousness of Christ is like a fine clean white robe; is that not better? And would you not be glad to have it? Pray then to God to clothe you with it.

The new heart is a humble heart. The person who has it thinks highly of the great and blessed God – the majesty of heaven and earth. So he shrinks, as it were, into nothing before Him. He has such a view of the holiness of God and His commandments, and such a sense of the wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart. He lies, as it were, in the dust and says like Job: “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”.

Missionary to India

25. The Final Return to Scotland

Alexander Duff first reached India in 1830 and since then he had preached the gospel there. But he had also put his heart into educating Indians, some of whom had been converted. But after more than 30 years of hard effort, he was no longer as strong as he used to be.

In July 1863 Duff once again became seriously ill with dysentery; it left him quite unfit for his work. The only remedy his doctors knew of was to send him on a sea voyage; so he set sail for China.

For 15 years William Tweedie of Edinburgh had been looking after the Free Church's missionary work from Scotland. After his death in 1863, another minister took over but he found the extra work too heavy for him. Then Robert Candlish, a prominent Edinburgh minister took up these duties till somebody else could be found. Who could that be? “Duff,” was everyone's answer. And the call went out to the longest-serving missionary in Calcutta: “Come home to save the missions”. At first Duff was not convinced that it was his duty to leave India. But on board his ship, as he reviewed his situation in providence, he recognised that it was indeed time for him to return permanently to Scotland. He could see that his health was no longer good enough to allow him to survive the diseases and the climate of Calcutta.

As Duff prepared to leave for Scotland, various important people gathered to praise his record in India. Several meetings were held to bid him farewell. At one of them, as Duff emphasised his purpose in coming to India – to make known God's remedy for a lost world – he referred to “the power of a divine energy accompanying the preaching of the gospel”. It is, he said, that power designed by Almighty God to influence the minds of human beings everywhere. “It has”, he went on, “changed cruelty into sympathy, hatred into love, malice into kindness and goodwill.”

It was in the hope of seeing such spiritual and moral changes that he had come to India, and that hope had sustained him in the face of hard work, suffering, reproach and disappointment. And he promised: “Wherever I wander, wherever I roam, wherever I labour, wherever I rest, my heart will be still in India”. Then he proposed words that should be placed on his gravestone (besides a brief reference to his being a missionary and a friend of India): “Here lies Alexander Duff, by nature and practice a sinful guilty creature, but saved by grace, through faith in the blood and righteousness of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

On 20 December 1863 Duff set sail from Calcutta for the last time. He was still an ill man when he went aboard the *Hotspur*. Yet during the voyage to Cape Town he conducted some services and visited the soldiers who were being invalided home from India. He wrote of how every day he visited a soldier who was himself suffering from dysentery. Again and again Duff went over with him what he described as “the simple principles of the gospel”. But he had found the man very ignorant – he was not even able to read – and the missionary felt extremely sad as he saw no reason to believe that the soldier found rest in Christ.

On the last day of the year he recorded in his diary his wish: “May the Lord make it increasingly clear to me that I am really doing His will – really seeking, in sole obedience to His will, to promote His glory!” And on the first day of 1864, as he looked forward to the remaining part of his life, he asked, “What work, O Lord, hast Thou in store for me wherewith to glorify Thy holy name? O for light on this still dark and most perplexing subject! But I wait . . . on Thee.”

After a voyage of six weeks, the *Hotspur* sailed into Cape Town harbour, in the teeth of a hurricane. As soon as she had cast anchor, Duff felt compelled to go at once to his cabin to give thanks to God for bringing him safely from India. No doubt he was all the more earnest in giving thanks because it was almost exactly 34 years since he and his wife had been shipwrecked in the same area on their first voyage to India.

Duff knew no one in Cape Town but, believing that he was in the path of duty, he trusted that God would direct him. And his trust was totally justified; in less than half an hour after his ship had cast anchor there was a knock on his cabin door. It was a steward bringing a message from a Scottish minister, whose name was Morgan, inviting Duff to his manse.

As Duff was returning to Scotland with a view to taking over responsibility for administering his Church’s missions, he took the opportunity to visit those in southern Africa. It involved a journey from Cape Town of around 700 miles, only 31 of which he could travel by train. The rest of the journey

was undertaken in a covered wagon drawn by eight mules. They would move on for two or three hours at a time and then stop to unyoke the mules; the animals were set free to eat some grass, drink some water, and roll about in the sand. Just once on this trip, Duff reached a small inn. It was near evening but, as he did not like the look of the inn, he slept as usual in the wagon.

During his journey, Duff visited a valley then called Genadenthal, where a European missionary whose name was Schmidt had once settled. Originally the place had been named “valley of apes”, but Genadenthal means “valley of grace” – a reminder of the blessing on Schmidt’s ministry. In all, Duff travelled many hundreds of miles over a period of six months, encouraging the missionaries in their work as he inspected the various mission stations. For him the most important was Lovedale; it was the main station run by his Church in Africa.

Duff reached Scotland again in August 1864. He was soon involved in ordaining two new missionaries for India – one at a service in Perth and the other in Aberdeen. It was a fitting beginning to his remaining 14 years of service in the cause of Christ.

The Holy War

5. Emmanuel Again Rescues Mansoul

Rev Roderick MacLeod

This article completes this series, which summarises John Bunyan's book, *The Holy War*. He pictures the human soul as the town of Mansoul. We have seen it fall into the hands of Diabolus (the devil) and its recapture by Emmanuel (Jesus Christ). King Shaddai is God, My Lord Secretary is the Holy Spirit, and the Diabolonians are the devil's followers.

From chapter 12 to the end, Bunyan pictures some aspects of the Christian warfare. There was first the sad error of both heart and head which resulted in Mansoul becoming secure in a selfish way. A man called Carnal Security was responsible for this. He began his work of deceit by stating how strong Mansoul was; he even claimed that it could not be conquered. He emphasised how powerful the captains were, with their slings and their battering rams. Then he talked about their defences and their strongholds. And he finished by claiming that their prince had given an assurance that Mansoul would be happy for ever.

Mansoul embraced the views Carnal Security had taught. The result was that they forgot that their strength was in Emmanuel and in the influences of my Lord Secretary. Visits to Emmanuel therefore took place less often. They

no longer cared if he came to the weekly feast. Their cold attitude towards him grieved him and his Secretary.

Emmanuel saw that, through Carnal Security's activity, the hearts of the men of Mansoul became cold and they did not show the same love to him. First he complained to the Secretary about their state; he said, "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that Mansoul had walked in my ways! I would have fed them with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock would I have sustained them." Then he said in his heart: "I will return to the court and go to my place till Mansoul shall consider and acknowledge their offence".

He twice found them dining at Mr Carnal Security's house and saw that they were not willing to reason about what was good for them. So he silently left Mansoul. At this point, a Mr Godly Fear begin to act. Alarmed because it was clear that Emmanuel had left them, he warned Mansoul of their deplorable backsliding.

In Chapter 13 we read about the Diabolonians still dwelling within Mansoul (by which we are to understand the old man – the corrupt nature as opposed to the holy nature in the believer; see Rom 6:6). They took courage and became so bold as to influence the conduct of the town. Diabolus rejoiced to hear of this and decided to take advantage of the town when it was weak and the Diabolonians were strong. He resolved to raise an army of many thousands of doubters hoping to make Mansoul either disbelieve the truth, or despair of salvation, or both. Though Mansoul forgot its first love and was in a backsliding and dangerous condition, it was never left to give up the conflict against Diabolus altogether.

In chapters 14-17 we are shown the furious attempts of Diabolus to return to Mansoul, which he claimed as his own. This is what he decided to do:

First, to set a most terrifying host in battle array under his captains. These were Captain Rage, with thousands of Election doubters; Captain Fury over the Vocation doubters; Captain Damnation over the Grace doubters; Captain Insatiable over the Faith doubters; Captain Brimstone over the Resurrection Doubters; Captain No Ease over the Salvation doubters; Captain Sepulchre over the glory doubters; and Captain Past Hope over the Felicity doubters.

Second, to set his Blood men against Mansoul. They served their master by persecution: Captains such as Cain, Ishmael, Esau and Saul.

Mansoul was soon convinced, if not of the greatness of their sin, certainly of the greatness of their misery and danger with such evil enemies against them. They sent many petitions to Emmanuel. But he did not receive them because they were not in the handwriting of my Lord Secretary. The Lord Secretary refused to act for them yet, for they had to learn anew that it is an

evil and a bitter thing to grieve Emmanuel as they had done. As Mr Understanding thought upon this situation, he encouraged Mansoul that the day of their distress would soon be over. So they were encouraged to resist the Diabolonians until Emmanuel would come. Diabolus took the town but not the castle, which was strongly guarded by those who respected Emmanuel's royal right to rule there.

Feeling now the enormity of their sin as well as the greatness of their misery, they asked the Secretary to help them; for they did not know how to order their words by reason of their darkness. Believing that no petition would be accepted by the Prince unless it was in the handwriting of the Secretary, they pled with him earnestly. In the light of their pleas, the Secretary agreed to help them. The petition was drawn up, and Captain Credence took it to Emmanuel. Soon afterwards, according to the Captain's testimony, Emmanuel appeared to help them as they fought the good fight of faith in the fields outside the town. When Emmanuel appeared, the battle was soon over. He smiled on the people of Mansoul and said, "Peace be unto you". With great solemnity they prepared to enter the city with their returned, pardoning Prince.

The gates of the town were set open to receive Him. As Emmanuel drew near, the elders sang, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in". They asked, "Who is this King of glory?" And they answered, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle". As he passed through the street, they also sang Psalm 68:24: "They have seen Thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary".

Captains Credence, Good hope, Charity, Patience and the rest of the captains entered Mansoul with Emanuel. He rode into the town in his chariot, "the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of the town of Mansoul". All the streets were made fragrant and beautiful to the spiritual senses of the Prince. The elders praised and worshipped Emmanuel for his grace and love. They mourned and wept for their wickedness which had caused him to depart. They wept aloud and asked him again to confirm his love to Mansoul. He answered, "I am returned to Mansoul with mercies"

In the last chapter, we find several important matters about the life of faith. We are told why there needs to be a continual war with indwelling Diabolonians. Emmanuel says that they are left in Mansoul for good reasons: (1.) To show the people what they once were and to make them humble. (2.) To keep them awake. For if there were no enemies within the town, there were many outside. And if there were none within, the people of Mansoul would sleep, and those outside would kill them instantly. There is a description

of the conflict, showing God's love and kindness towards them. Then there is a description of the end of the conflict, when they are all brought to Shaddai's court in peace and made most blessed in everlasting glory.

Emmanuel counselled them to keep their garments clean, to wash often in the fountain opened for that purpose. He told them: "Nothing can hurt thee but sin; nothing can grieve me but sin; nothing can make thee base before thy foes but sin; take heed of sin, my Mansoul". He closed with this: "Hold fast till I come".

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

21. The Final Attack

On Saturday, 18 January 1862, the war began. Gunshots could be heard all around the mission house where Paton, Abraham and his wife were sheltering. The blood-curdling war-cries rang out from the surrounding trees and bushes. The sounds of fighting came nearer and nearer. Miaki and his men had retreated from their enemies and were hiding behind the mission house.

Miaki eventually sent a message to some inland tribes asking them to come and help him "fight Missi and the Tannese who were friends of the worship". He tried to persuade them, saying, "Let us cook his body and Abraham's, and distribute them to every village on this side of the island".

The fighting continued and Chief Nowar protected the mission house and the people inside it until he was hit by a spear on the knee. He was very nearly carried off by the inland warriors to be killed and feasted upon, but his young men charged the enemy and rescued their chief, and carried him home in triumph. But with Nowar now gone, the mission house was no longer protected. The warriors started shooting directly at it and beating against the walls and doors with their clubs. They smashed their way into the storeroom and carried away everything they fancied, including Paton's boat, mast, oars and sail. Anything they did not want they ripped up and destroyed.

A chief called to Paton to come to the window, saying he was sorry for what was happening. As Paton appeared, the man sent an axe through the window, crying: "Come on; let us kill him now!" Paton dodged the axe and shouted to the man that God would punish him if he killed any of them. The chief dismissed what Paton told him; he said that the people of Erromanga had not been punished for killing Mr and Mrs Gordon. At once he raised his axe again, aiming it at Paton's head. Behind the chief, many guns were also raised, pointing at Paton.

Paton then surprised them all by suddenly taking aim with a revolver. They

did not know he had a gun; Mr Copeland had left it with Paton on his last visit and Paton had put it away wishing never to have to use it. The chief and all his warriors fell flat to the ground and half-crawled and half-ran to the bushes. They continued to shout at Paton and Abraham in the mission house, waving their guns at them in defiance. As night came, the warriors left, loaded with all the goods from the store and Abraham's house.

Once they had left, Paton ventured out to visit Miaki and Nouka. They said they were very sorry for what had happened and told Paton that they had given a present of food to the inland people to persuade them not to do any harm to Paton or Abraham.

Paton had sent Abraham to go and speak to Nowar. Nowar told him that the opposite was true. The present of food was payment for them to return the next morning to kill Paton and his helpers! Nowar advised them to take some of their stuff over to his village during the night, for safe-keeping. It was a difficult and dangerous job and they could take very little. But in the end it made no difference, because Nowar kept everything they took over.

Paton and Abraham and his wife waited for the morning light. What would this day bring? As the rays of the sun chased away the darkness of the night, a trumpet-like sound boomed across the harbour. Miaki stood not far from the mission house and was blowing on a great conch, a special shell that sounded like a trumpet. Paton came out of the house to find out why the shell was being blown and, to his horror, he saw an army of howling warriors stampeding down the hill on the opposite side of the bay, making straight for the mission house. There was only one thing for Paton to do – to run!

He shouted for Abraham and his wife and another teacher who had just arrived. He locked the door to his house and then they all ran for their lives to Nowar's village. There they found the people in a panic, terrified of the large army of warriors approaching them.

Paton persuaded them to cut down trees to build blockades. They went on doing this until they were so terrified of the swarm of approaching warriors that they started throwing themselves on the ground and against trees. They were crying; "Missi, it's of no use! We will all be killed and eaten today! See what a host is coming against us."

Nowar, with his lame knee, had given orders for a canoe to be turned upside down. Then he sat on it where he could see the approaching warriors. "Missi, sit down beside me and pray to our Jehovah God, for if He does not send deliverance now, we are all dead men. They will kill us all because of you, and quickly. Pray, and I will watch!"

The blood-thirsty warriors advanced and Paton prayed. He did so earnestly, with death and eternity staring him in the face. The advancing warriors

were only a short distance away when Nowar touched Paton's knee. "Missi, Jehovah is hearing! They are all standing still."

Paton looked. As far as he could see, there was a solid mass of warriors along the shore and the harbour. But they were all standing still and silent! A messenger rushed between them, delivering some news, and then ran off into the trees. Then to the amazement of Paton and all in Nowar's village, the army of warriors began to turn and slowly marched away in a great silence. They disappeared into the bushes at the far end of the harbour. What a deliverance!

Paton wrote about this event: "We were on that day His trusting and defenceless children. Would you not, if you had been one of our circle, have joined us in praising the Lord God for deliverance from the jaws of death? I do not know why they turned back; but I have no doubt it was the doing of God to save our lives."

Paton looked to God for help and deliverance. And when he was given it, he did not forget to thank God. We should be asking God to keep us safe from the dangers around us, even although they might not be as terrifying as those Paton had to face. And each night, as we lie down to sleep, we should ask God to keep us safe, like David did in Psalm 4:

"I will both lay me down in peace, and quiet sleep will take;

Because Thou only me to dwell in safety, Lord, dost make." *S M Campbell*

For Younger Readers

The Lamb of God

Do you remember reading, last month, about sin? Do you remember being told that sin is doing wrong against God?

Think of somebody long ago, in the time of Isaiah. Perhaps his name was Nathan. He has sinned. He has done something wrong against God. So God was angry with Nathan because of his sin.

What could Nathan do? How could his sin be taken away so that God would no longer be angry? Nathan must choose a lamb and take it up to Jerusalem. There God had His temple, His house.

At the temple, Nathan must put his hand on the head of the lamb and think over his sins. What was he doing? He was shifting his sins onto the lamb. And the lamb must die instead of Nathan. When the lamb died, God would no longer be angry with Nathan.

Now this is just a picture of how sin can be put away. The lamb

could not really take away Nathan's sin. But it was a picture of Someone who was to come – Someone who really could take away sin.

A long time afterwards three men were walking along. One of them was known as John the Baptist. He saw the Someone; it was Jesus. And what did John do? He pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God". Nathan's lamb was a picture of Jesus. Jesus came, as John said, to take away the sin of the world.

Jesus came to die instead of sinners like you. You must look to Jesus to take away your sin.

Attend Public Worship Diligently

J C Ryle

Another piece, slightly edited, from this noted nineteenth-century English minister. It follows the article last month on the duty always to remember that God sees us. You should note that it may be more difficult than in Ryle's time to find a church where the gospel is faithfully preached. It is also important that the church and its worship should be scriptural in other ways. Free Presbyterians in particular would do well to remember their privileges and bear such matters in mind when choosing a place to study and work.

Be regular in going to the house of God, whenever it is open for prayer and preaching and it is in your power to attend. Be regular in keeping the Lord's day holy, and decide that God's one day out of the seven shall always be given to its rightful owner.

I wish not to leave any false impression on your minds. Do not go away and say I told you that attending your church made up the whole of religion. I tell you no such thing. I have no wish to see you grow up Pharisees, merely formal in your religion. If you think that just to carry your body to a certain building, at certain times, on a certain day in the week, will make you a Christian and prepare you to meet God, I tell you flatly you are miserably deceived. All service without heart-service is unprofitable and vain. They only are true worshippers who "worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23).

But means of grace are not to be despised just because they are not saviours. Gold is not food; you cannot eat it – but you would not therefore say it is useless and throw it away. Your soul's eternal well-being most certainly does not depend on means of grace but, as a general rule, it is no less certain that your soul will not do well without them. God might take all who are saved to heaven in a chariot of fire, as He did Elijah, but He does

not do so. He might teach them all by visions and dreams and miraculous events, without requiring them to read or think for themselves, but He does not do so. And why not? Because He is a God who works by means, and it is His law and will that means shall be used in all man's dealings with Him. No one but a fool would think of building a house without ladders and scaffolding; just so will no wise man despise means.

I dwell on this point because Satan will try hard to fill your minds with arguments against means. He will draw your attention to the numbers of people who are no better for using them. "Do you not see," he will whisper, "that those who go to church are no better than those who stay away?"

But do not let this influence you. It is never fair to argue against a thing because it is wrongly used. It does not follow that the means of grace are useless just because many who attend on them get no good from them. Medicine is not to be despised just because many take it and do not recover their health. No one would think of giving up eating and drinking because others choose to eat and drink too much and so make themselves ill. The value of the means of grace, like other things, depends very much on the manner and spirit in which we use them.

I dwell on this point too because of the strong anxiety I feel that all young people should regularly hear the preaching of Christ's gospel. I cannot tell you how important I think this is. By God's blessing, the ministry of the gospel might be the means of converting your soul, of leading you to a saving knowledge of Christ, of making you a child of God in deed and in truth. This would be cause for eternal thankfulness indeed. This would be an event over which angels would rejoice.

But even if this were not the case, there is a restraining power and influence in the ministry of the gospel, under which I earnestly desire every young person to be brought. There are thousands whom it keeps back from evil, though it has not yet turned them to God. It has made them far better members of society, though it has not yet made them true Christians. There is a certain kind of mysterious power in the faithful preaching of the gospel which, unseen, tells on multitudes who listen to it without receiving it into their hearts.

To hear sin cried down and holiness cried up, to hear Christ exalted and the works of the devil denounced, to hear the kingdom of heaven and its blessedness described, and the world and its emptiness exposed – to hear this, week after week, Sabbath after Sabbath, is seldom without good effect to the soul. It makes it far harder afterwards to run into any excess of riot. It acts as a wholesome check upon a man's heart. This, I believe, is one way in which that promise of God is made good: "My word shall not return

unto Me void" (Isaiah 55:11). There is much truth in that strong saying of Whitefield: "The gospel keeps many a one from the jail and gallows, if it does not keep him from hell".

Let me here mention another point which is closely connected with this subject. Let nothing ever tempt you to become a Sabbath-breaker. I press this on your attention. Make conscience of giving all your Sabbath to God. A spirit of disregarding this holy day is growing up among us with fearful rapidity, and not least among young people. Sabbath travelling by railways and steamboats, Sabbath visiting, Sabbath excursions are becoming every year more common and are doing infinite harm to souls.

Young people, be jealous on this point. Whether you live in town or country, take up a decided line; resolve not to profane your Sabbath. Do not let the plausible argument of "needful relaxation for your body", do not let the example of all around you, do not let the invitation of companions you may meet – do not let any of these things move you to depart from this settled rule, that God's day shall be given to God.

Once give over caring for the Sabbath, and in the end you will give over caring for your soul. The steps which lead to this conclusion are easy and regular. Begin with not honouring God's day, and you will soon not honour God's house; stop honouring God's house, and you will soon cease to honour God's book; stop honouring God's book, and you will soon give God no honour at all. Let a man lay the foundation of having no Sabbath, and I am never surprised if he finishes with the top-stone of no God. It is a remarkable saying of Judge Hale: "Of all the persons who were convicted of very serious crimes while I was upon the bench, I found only a few who would not confess, on inquiry, that they began their career of wickedness by a neglect of the Sabbath".

Young people, you may be thrown among companions who forget the honour of the Lord's day; but resolve, by God's help, that you will always remember to keep it holy. Honour it by regularly attending some place where the gospel is preached. Settle down under a faithful ministry and, once settled, let your place in church never be empty. Believe me, you will find a special blessing following you: God says, "If thou . . . call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth" (Isaiah 58:13,14). And one thing is certain: your feelings about the Sabbath will always be a test of your fitness for heaven. Sabbaths are a foretaste of heaven. Whoever finds them a burden and not a privilege may be sure that his heart stands in need of a mighty change.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2008-09

Names for Exercise 2

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Looking Around Us

Guilty for Ever

It was a particularly horrible murder. A gang of about a dozen teenagers, including two girls, ambushed a 16-year-old schoolboy last year and chased him, shouting, “Kill him, kill him”. They were armed with knives and bats, and ran away laughing after stabbing him through the heart.

On the day that five teenagers were sentenced for the schoolboy’s murder, his mother sent them a message: “As you spilled and touched his blood, no matter how many times you wash your hands, his blood will stay on them for as long as you live”. She was right in thinking that the guilt of the crime will follow them throughout their lives. Murder is a specially serious sin, which is why death should normally be the proper punishment for it. However severe the punishment these teenagers may suffer for their crime, it will never take away their guilt before God, and indeed their guilt will follow them into eternity.

Yes, their guilt will follow them for ever and ever – unless they are brought to look to Jesus Christ – for His blood cleanses from all sin. (By Christ’s blood we mean the benefits that flow from His death.) All sins are serious and some, like murder, are particularly serious. But no sin is beyond the power of Christ’s blood to wash it away.

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