

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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Reactions to God's Word

Were you in church last Sabbath? What was the sermon about? Perhaps something was said about sin, about how Adam fell into sin and all mankind with him. Sin is a dreadful thing because it is committed against the gloriously-holy God who dwells in heaven in absolute, unreachable majesty. We are all sinners; we are all guilty, which means that we are in danger of being punished by God for ever. What is more, our hearts are polluted by sin; we need to be cleansed, but that is something we can never do for ourselves – and something we will never want to do – unless God Himself will come and change us.

When you heard about these things, how did you react? (And if there was not much emphasis on them last Sabbath, then ask yourself how you reacted the last time you did hear these things emphasised.) Did you try to argue against them, or did you submit to them as the truth? But what does it mean for someone to submit to these things? It means that they will confess to God that they have done wrong, that they have broken His commandments. They will follow the example of David: when he had once again submitted to God and His commandments, he declared: “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord” (Psalm 32:5).

And, when you were in church, did you hear about the remedy for sin? Were you pointed to Christ as the One who came into the world to save sinners, who took their place and died instead? Again, did you submit to these truths? But what does it mean to submit to these truths about Christ as Saviour? It means to receive Him as He is set before us in the Scriptures; it means to look to Him as the One who died for sinners like us – in other words, to believe on Him.

Do you remember the time when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him? John called on the two disciples who were with him: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He was telling them that Jesus was the real sacrifice, the One who could really take away sin. None of the sacrifices, of lambs and of other animals – none of the vast

number that were offered since the time of Adam – could actually take away sin. But you can think of them as pictures of the sacrifice which Jesus was to offer.

So John was telling his disciples to look to Jesus, to believe in Him, as the One who was to offer Himself as a sacrifice instead of sinners, to suffer their punishment. And when you hear John's words to his disciples, or read them in the Bible, you are to think of them as addressed to you too. God requires you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the one effective sacrifice for sin. If you do not look to Him, *you* will have to suffer for your sins for ever and ever; you will have to endure the awfulness of a lost eternity.

And did you hear in church about Jesus as the One who not only died but rose again on the third day? Did you hear about Him as the One who ascended to heaven and who now sits at the right hand of God? Did you hear about Him as a Prophet, a Priest and a King? As a Prophet He teaches sinners; as a Priest He makes intercession for them before His Father; and as a King He subdues sinners to Himself and rules over them. How do you respond to these truths? Do you pray that the exalted Saviour would be *your* Prophet and Priest and King? One thing is sure: we all very much need Him to act for us in these ways. Otherwise we will be left in ignorance about God and His ways; our prayers – if we pray at all – will not be heard in heaven; and we will continue to wander away from God.

It is sad that so many people refuse to ask Christ to help them, even when He is very near to them – as He is in public worship. Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside one day when Jesus passed by. He knew he needed something badly; he was blind and he very much wanted to be able to see. So he cried out to Jesus. Even when others told him to be quiet, he went on crying out; indeed he cried out all the more. And Jesus did help him; He made the blind man able to see.

Although Jesus has gone to heaven, He is still able to help sinners. And what greater need do sinners have than to get healing for their souls – so that they might be able to see Jesus with their sin-blinded souls?

Jean belonged to Dundee. Both her parents were godly. Her brother went to Brechin to work but became involved in serious sins. Clearly he had not submitted to the demands of God's Word. In Brechin he suffered some injury and became ill. He had to return home and then came under conviction of sin. His conviction lasted for a long time and he was often upset. One day no one saw him for a long time and her mother asked Jean: "Where is your brother?" But soon afterwards he appeared and came into the house with a smile on his face. His mother and Jean were amazed at the change and asked what had caused it. He said, "Ah mother, I see that there is more merit in the

blood of Jesus than there is guilt in my sins, and why should I fear?" Some time afterwards he died in great peace – the kind of peace which a minister described as “the peace of God in believing the gospel”.

And why did he have such peace? Because he looked to Jesus as the Saviour who died for sinners. He looked to Jesus as his *Priest*; he saw Jesus as the One who had offered Himself up as a sacrifice for sinners and was representing them before God the Father. He saw Christ's sacrifice as totally effective; that is why he spoke so emphatically about the merit of Christ's blood. And it was because Christ had gone to the Father with the merits of His blood that this man's prayers could be heard; Jean's brother could go before God in prayer for the sake of Christ, and expect to be heard.

Jean's brother also took Christ as his *Prophet*. He realised that he was ignorant and that he needed to be taught. But whatever Jean or their parents could tell him, nothing could enter his heart unless Christ Himself would come and teach him. The young man found salvation only when Christ, the perfect Prophet, came and revealed to him God's way of saving sinners – through the Scriptures, applied to his soul by the Holy Spirit.

And he took Christ as his *King*. He was made willing to submit to Christ in everything; he accepted the absolute authority of the great King; from his heart he began to acknowledge that he must obey all God's commandments; and he could see clearly that all this was for his good. He needed to be restrained from all kinds of sin, from all the foolish actions, words and thoughts that were so natural to him. As King, Christ could protect him from all these things and from every possible enemy, including the devil himself. And when his short life was over, King Jesus brought this young man to be with him in heaven for ever.

Jean's brother, it would seem, was no longer able to go to church. But Christ Jesus met with him. How good God is to those who are unworthy! And let us remember that we are all unworthy. But the fact that Christ met Jean's brother at home should not encourage anyone to stay away from church – deceiving themselves into thinking that they may get a blessing from God even when they are acting in rebellion against Him.

How important it is to be serious about our response to what we hear in church and to what we read in our Bible at home! Let us remember Bartimaeus, and his earnestness in crying for a blessing from Christ. Although Christ has ascended to heaven, He is not far from any of us. So, wherever we are, and especially when we are in church, we ought to cry earnestly for a blessing from the Saviour. “This is [God's] commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). We have no right to disobey. It is the one response of which God approves.

Do not Hesitate Any More

J C Ryle

Another piece, slightly edited, from this noted nineteenth-century English minister. It follows the article last month on the duty to pray. This article is the last in this series of advice for young people. Ryle speaks strongly here, but he is not suggesting that, for instance, every converted young man should become a minister unless God calls him to that work.

Now I hasten towards a conclusion. I have said things that many perhaps will not like, that they will not receive. But I appeal to your consciences: *Are they not true?*

Young people, you all have consciences. Corrupt and ruined by the fall though we are, each of us has a conscience. In a corner of each heart there sits a witness for God, a witness who condemns when we do wrong and approves when we do right. To that witness I make my appeal this day: *Are the things that I have been saying not true?*

Resolve then this day to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Before the day of grace is past – before your conscience has become hardened by age and deadened by repeated trampling under foot, while you have strength and time and opportunities – go and join yourself to the Lord in an everlasting covenant not to be forgotten. The Spirit will not always strive. The voice of conscience will become feebler and fainter every year you continue to resist it. The Athenians said to Paul: “We will hear thee again of this matter”, but they had heard him for the last time (Acts 17:32). Make haste; do not delay. Do no linger or hesitate any more.

Think of the unspeakable comfort you will give to parents, relations and friends if you take my counsel. They have spent time, money and health to rear you and make you what you are. Surely they deserve some consideration from you. “Who can reckon up the joy and gladness which young people have in their power to bring about? Who can tell the anxiety and sorrow that sons like Esau and Hophni and Phinehas and Absalom may cause? Truly indeed does Solomon say, “A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother” (Proverbs 10:1). O consider these things and give God your heart! Let it not be said of you at last, as it is of many, that your “youth was a blunder, your manhood a struggle, and your old age a regret”.

Think of the good you may be the instruments of doing to the world. Almost all the most eminent saints of God sought the Lord early. Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, all served God from their youth. God seems to delight in putting special honour upon young servants; remember the honour

He placed upon our own young king, Edward VI. And what might we not confidently expect if young men today would consecrate the springtime of their lives to God? Agents are wanted now in almost every great and good cause, and they cannot be found. There is machinery of every kind for spreading truth, but hands to work it do not exist. Money is more easily got than men for doing good. Ministers are needed for new churches, missionaries are needed for new stations, visitors are needed for neglected districts, teachers are needed for new schools. Many a good cause is standing still merely for need of agents. The supply of godly, faithful, trustworthy men, for posts like those I have named, is far below the demand.

Young men of the present day, this is a special age of activity. We are shaking off some of our past selfishness. People no longer sleep the sleep of indifference about others, as their forefathers did. They are beginning to be ashamed of thinking like Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" A wide field of usefulness is open before you, if you are only made willing to enter upon it. The harvest is great, and the labourers are few. Be zealous of good works. Come, come to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

This is, in some sort, to be like God, not only good but doing good (Psalm 119:68). This is the way to follow the steps of your Lord and Saviour: "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). This is to live as David did; he "served his own generation" (Acts 13:36).

And who can doubt that this is the path which most suits an immortal soul? Who would not rather leave this world like Josiah, lamented by all, than depart like Jehoram, "without being desired"? (2 Chronicles 21:20). Is it better to be an idle, frivolous, useless cumberer of the ground, to live for your body, your selfishness, your lusts and your pride, or to spend and be spent in the glorious cause of usefulness to your fellow men – to be like William Wilberforce or Lord Shaftesbury, a blessing to your country and the world; to be like Howard, the friend of the prisoner and the captive; to be like Schwartz, the spiritual father of hundreds of immortal souls in heathen lands; to be like that man of God, Robert M'Cheyne, a burning and a shining light, an epistle of Christ known and read of all men, the quickener of every Christian heart that comes across your path? O who can doubt? Who can for one moment doubt?

Consider your responsibilities. Think of the privilege and luxury of doing good. Resolve this day to be useful. At once give your hearts to Christ.

Think, lastly, of the happiness that will come to your own soul if you serve God – happiness by the way as you travel through life, and happiness in the end when the journey is over. Believe me, whatever vain notions you may have heard, there is a reward for the righteous even in this world.

Godliness has indeed the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come. There is solid peace in feeling that God is your friend. There is a real satisfaction in knowing that, however great your unworthiness, you are complete in Christ, you have an enduring portion, you have chosen that good part which shall not be taken from you.

The backslider in heart may well be “filled with his own ways”, but “a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Proverbs 14:14). The path of the worldly man grows darker and darker every year that he lives; the path of the Christian is as a shining light, growing brighter and brighter to the very end. His sun is just rising when the sun of the worldly is setting for ever; his best things are all beginning to blossom and bloom for ever when those of the worldly are all slipping out of his hands and passing away.

Young people, these things are true. Suffer the word of exhortation. Be persuaded. Take up the cross. Follow Christ. Yield yourselves unto God.

“Chosen not for Good in Me”

4. Dundee

Alex MacLean

This is a further part of a paper given at the 2006 Youth Conference on “the life and ministry of Robert Murray M'Cheyne”. The last article looked at M'Cheyne's first period of ministry as the assistant minister of Larbert and Dunipace in central Scotland. There he threw himself into the work of preaching and visiting. After less than a year he was called to Dundee.

John Roxburgh led the service when Robert Murray M'Cheyne became the minister of the new congregation at St Peter's Church, Dundee, on 24 November 1836. The following Lord's Day, M'Cheyne preached his first sermon to the people there, taking as his text: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:1-3). M'Cheyne preached from this text each year on the anniversary of his induction.

There were about 3400 people within the boundaries of the new parish,

with the church able to accommodate 1100. But many belonged to other churches and others did not attend church at all. So M‘Cheyne began his ministry evangelising among the people. It was common at that time to charge a pew rent to those who attended the church services but M‘Cheyne did not agree with this practice and stopped it. He was trying to make it easier for people to come to church.

M‘Cheyne’s short but active ministry as minister of St Peter’s was broken by bouts of illness. He did not enjoy good health and it is not surprising that, as he regularly visited the sick and dying, he succumbed so frequently to the various illnesses which were common at that time.

His ministry continued in a similar vein to what he undertook in Larbert and Dunipace but with the additional work of ministering to the many who came to him in soul concern. As he dealt with each individual, he directed them to the only refuge for lost souls, the Lord Jesus Christ.

M‘Cheyne put into practice what he learned from his professors while a student, adopting the methodical style of sermon preparation and delivery which Welsh followed. Chalmers’ evangelical spirit, which was exhibited in his concern for the poor and the unchurched, was reflected in M‘Cheyne’s life and ministry.

The young minister of St Peter’s had various concerns about his ministry and spiritual life as well as the spiritual well-being of his congregation.

1. He was concerned that his people might love the messenger more than the message he delivered to them. “Ministers are but the pole,” he told them; “it is the brazen serpent you are to look to.”

2. Before he was converted he loved to be praised, but afterwards he was anxious to preach Christ and not himself. He wrote: “Looking at our own shining faces is the bane [ruin] of the spiritual life and of the ministry.”

3. Assurance of faith was another matter which exercised his mind. At that time, many thought that few of the Lord’s people have this assurance. He was afraid that many who held this view were living in sin and did not wish to know that they were on a dangerous road. He believed that a sense of forgiveness of sin comes from looking out to the beauty, worth and freeness of Christ, not from marks seen in oneself. He acknowledged that the seal of the Spirit and love to the brethren are chief marks of a saved state. But he did not feel that it was necessary to be able to say, “My Beloved is mine”, before claiming to have assurance – because by simply resting in Christ one can have assurance. According to him, faith is not a complicated matter. It is no more than the empty hand which Christ takes in His, as promised in the gospel.

4. Many believers have expressed doubts and fears about their state before

God. Others have been led to think that these doubts and fears are themselves marks of grace, and so concluded that they too were Christians because they found these questions in their own minds. M'Cheyne felt that they had nothing of a spiritual nature except the doubts and fears, and so had only a name to live. "We are truly secure only when our eye is on Jesus", was his firm conviction.

5. M'Cheyne set up communicant's classes for those who wished to go to the Lord's table for the first time. There they were instructed according to the Word of God. To attend these classes did not mean automatic admission to the Lord's table; indeed quite a number who attended were not granted the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper. M'Cheyne had first gone to the Lord's table some months before he was converted and he personally knew the danger of admitting people to this sacrament who had not come to trust for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. He did not wish anyone to have a false hope spiritually or to make a false profession of religion.

Samson

5. Made Heavenly and Pure

Rev J B Jardine

Last month's section of this Youth Conference paper dealt with Samson as a pattern. It would be helpful to read Judges 13-16.

Samson resembled Christ in many ways; in some of these he was a type of the Saviour.

Samson's birth was, like Christ's, foretold by an angel. Samson was sanctified, or set apart to holiness, from the womb, as Christ was holy from eternity. The first of Samson's mighty acts recorded in the Bible was his killing a lion that roared against him in the gardens of Timnath; Christ on entering His public ministry conquered the tempter – the great enemy of truth and righteousness, the devil. Samson conquered the lion with his bare hands; Christ, alone in the wilderness, overcame the roaring lion, the devil.

Delilah betrayed Samson with her kisses and Judas betrayed the Saviour with a kiss. The Philistines made sport of Samson in the same way that the Jews mocked the Lord. The Philistines supposed that Samson was weak and helpless and brought him out to be abused, for their amusement. He was mocked and ridiculed and set at nought. The sovereignty and honour of God were insulted when Samson was insulted. The Jews abused the Saviour in the same way.

It is in the death of Samson that we are particularly reminded of the death

of Christ. The Philistines were glorifying in what they thought was the triumph of their god Dagon over the God of Israel. To show that He was supreme over everything, God heard the prayer of His sinful yet penitent servant. As Robert Gordon says, God “so imparted to him faith and strength”, that when “he bowed himself with all his might”, “the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein; so the dead which he slew in his death were more than they which he slew in his life”.

In this the purpose of the Saviour’s death may be seen. He died to vindicate His Father’s honour as Lawgiver and Judge. For this reason Christ submitted to insult, dishonour and death. In apparent weakness, loaded with the taunts and reproaches of ungodly men, He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. By death He achieved a glorious victory; He spoiled principalities and powers and made an open show of them. Through His victory, there was deliverance for the true Israel of God.

The Jews wanted Christ to die. Caiaphas, the high priest, said to them, “Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (John 11:49,50). Samson, like Christ, wrought out deliverance without the help of any other person. He was not the leader of an army. So Christ wrought out salvation for His people by Himself, without the help of others.

Both Samson and Christ died while praying, Samson prayed for vengeance on Israel’s enemies, but Christ prayed for forgiveness for His enemies. In his death, Samson slew many of God’s enemies; Christ by His death overcame sin, Satan, hell and the grave.

Samson’s failings: He enjoyed many advantages; he was instructed by godly parents and had special marks of God’s favour. Yet with all these advantages, as Gordon says, “his history presents a sad example of the deceitfulness of sin in establishing its dominion in the heart, and even in darkening and perverting the understanding”. By considering Samson’s folly we may all learn a useful but solemn lesson.

Samson was personally responsible for how he used the unique blessings the Lord gave him. His failures here are obvious. No doubt the temptation to trifle with the gift God gave him was all the greater because it qualified him for extraordinary physical deeds. These deeds, though greater than the heroic acts of other men, were in some ways similar to them; so he was more likely to forget that they were from God and not the result of his own abilities. In other words, he was liable to pride and to the fall that pride brings. Samson did not properly take to heart that God had a spiritual purpose in calling him; he did not properly resist his own fleshly wishes. An example of this was to take a Philistine wife, which God overruled for His own glory.

Thus we see an example of Samson's failings at the outset; yet we also see that God used these failings for His own purposes.

Whenever Samson consciously put God's purposes and the needs of Israel first and his own wishes second, he acted by faith as a Nazarite – someone dedicated to the Lord. Whenever he put his own lusts first and these purposes and needs second, he failed through sin.

Chapter 16 of Judges records the last events of Samson's life. It is a record, as Alfred Edersheim comments, of his "using God's gift, entrusted for the highest and holiest purposes, for self-indulgence, and then of betraying and losing it". This betrayal and loss resulted from Samson taking for himself what was meant for God.

The first step Samson took towards denying God and backsliding from Him was to regard his God-given strength as his own, and to use it for his own selfish purposes. Samson ceased to be a Nazarite in his heart before he ceased to be one outwardly. Yet we must remember that the imperfection of his work was indicated prophetically when the angel announced to his mother that he would begin to deliver Israel (Judges 13:5).

But in spite of his failings, Samson is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as a man of faith. It was not, as someone has said, by "physical energy, but by faith in God's gift and calling, that he received strength to do the wonders he performed, only his faith was sadly lacking in discernment" and inconsistent in the way he used it. Edersheim puts the matter in a few words: "If the period of the Judges reached its highest point in Samson the Nazarite, it also sank to its lowest in Samson the man of carnal lusts". Yet God's Word stamps him as a believer, as does the general course of his life.

It appears that Samson obeyed the rules for a Nazarite without fault until shortly before his death. This is a proof that he recognized God's authority, by which these rules had been given. We are bound to look on him as a believer.

“And Then . . . ?”

Are you coming near the end of your school years? Are you now thinking of the next stage in your life? What job would you like to do? Which university would you like to attend? Which courses should you apply for? These are important decisions which may have a bearing on your whole future. They are decisions you should pray about; so ask the Lord to direct you in all these matters. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him", God says in His Word. "And", He goes on to promise, "He shall direct thy paths."

It is important for you to consider all these decisions carefully and make wise choices. Yet there is something even more important, isn't there? It is your need of salvation and to prepare for death and eternity. These are solemn matters; they need your attention first and foremost. What did the Saviour tell others? “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” That should be your priority!

Many years ago a young man came to visit an old professor who had taught at a well-known university. As the professor had known him since he was a child, the lad was delighted to tell him that his parents had agreed to him studying law. He wished to apply for a place in this respected university and he intended to work hard and achieve the best degree possible. He spoke enthusiastically about his plans and hopes.

The old man had listened to him with great patience and kindness. When he paused, the professor asked gently: “Well! And when you have finished your studies, what do you mean to do then?”

“Then I shall graduate”, answered the young man.

“And then . . . ?” asked his old friend.

“And then”, the young man went on, “I shall have difficult cases to deal with and I hope to gain a great reputation for my eloquence and success.”

“And then . . . ?” repeated the godly man.

“And then I'm sure I shall be promoted to some important position and I shall become rich.”

“And then . . . ?”

“And then I shall live comfortably and honourably in wealth and respect and look forward to a quiet and happy old age.”

“And then . . . ?”

“And then . . . and then . . . and then . . . and then I shall die.”

Here the old Professor once more asked with solemnity and emphasis: “And then . . . ?”

To this the student made no answer; he just hung his head and went off to his room in silence, but in deep thought. This last *And then . . . ?* had pierced his heart like a sword, had darted like a flash of lightning into his soul, and he could not dislodge the impression.

The Lord blessed the words to him, and the result was a complete change in his mind and in the course of his life. He gave up studying law and began instead to study divinity. He spent his days in the labours of a minister of Christ.

You too ought to lay this question to heart and pray that the Lord would prepare you for the great eternity, which will follow your life here.

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

26. Fund-Raising in Australia

After a long and unpleasant journey Paton reached Sydney. He was glad to get off the boat and went to find the one man he knew. He hoped this man would be able to help him meet other Christians so that he could tell them about the missionary work in the South Sea Islands and then he might be able to start collecting money for the work.

After a not-very-successful start to his search for other believers, Paton was invited to stay with a Christian couple. They had many contacts with other Christians and Paton was invited to speak in some churches. As word spread about his work he was asked to speak in other places.

He did not ask for money directly but told people about the need and then left it up to them to give. Most of the time he did not collect the money himself but encouraged the people to send it to well-known Christians in Sydney and Melbourne who were collecting money on his behalf.

Most of the time he was treated kindly and the people listened well and gave generously. Occasionally he met with some hostility but he usually managed to overcome it and win people over so that, in the end, they too gave generously for the mission work.

There was one incident which Paton did not forget in a hurry. It appeared to terrify him more than any of the times when he was in danger from the savages on Tanna. He was travelling, in a remote part of Australia, to another place where meetings had been arranged. A young woman offered him her horse to get him there in time. He was reluctant to accept the offer because he was not a confident horse-rider and had only travelled in this way a couple of times before. But there was no other way of getting to his next meeting in time.

So he set off on the borrowed horse. He plodded along, keeping the horse on a tight reign so that it would not go too fast. Some time passed and three other horsemen caught up with him and chatted to him. They gave him advice on how to ride the horse better. And when they found out where he was heading, they told him he would need to speed up if he was to get there in time.

The horsemen then moved on, not prepared to go at Paton's slow pace. While Paton was happy to let them go on, his horse was not and decided to show them who was the champion. A few minutes later, Paton was yelling at the other horsemen to get out of the way, before he shot past them. They chased after him to try and help him get control of his horse. But the animal

seemed to treat the other horses on his heels as a challenge and so went even faster. Eventually they all disappeared behind him.

Paton held on for dear life as the horse madly galloped on and on. He was sure he and the horse would collide with some fence or tree or skid into the ground, but the horse sped on, missing the obstacles by inches.

After some time, Paton saw noticed a large house in the distance and that the horse was making for it. As they galloped up the driveway, Paton suddenly realised that the horse was not going to come to a dignified stop. He could see that it was more than likely the horse would collide with the wall of the house and that both he and the horse would be killed.

The family who lived in the house were on the verandah and watched the approaching horse with horror. A tall young man ran out and bravely grabbed the horse's bridle as it passed. He ran beside the horse trying to drag it back and, with Paton pulling on the reigns with all his might, they managed to get the horse to stop a few steps from the wall.

What a state Paton was in! His hat bashed down over his head, his clothes drenched and covered in mud. And, to make matters worse, when he got off the horse he could not stand up but tumbled into the mud. There he sat for some time till he felt the strength come back into his legs. The people of the house stared at him in amazement, not sure if he was drunk or mad, or both.

He had been so alarmed by the whole experience that, when he tried to speak, his words sounded strange, making him sound as if he was drunk. The people of the house thought he was drunk because he could neither talk clearly or walk properly. They were the people who had arranged the missionary meeting for him, but now they looked at him with suspicion.

Indeed they decided that he was drunk and not fit to take the meeting. The more he talked and tried to persuade them that he was sober, the more convinced they became that he was drunk. At last, as some time passed and Paton got over his fright, his speech and movements returned to normal and the people of the house realised he was sober and was indeed perfectly capable of holding a meeting that night.

They turned out to be very supportive of Paton and his work and he stayed with them several times after this. And you can imagine how he was never allowed to forget his first arrival at their home!

As we go through life we sometimes know there are big difficulties ahead of us. Then, with God's help, we may meet them and overcome them. But sometimes it is the unexpected, seemingly-smaller difficulties that give us bigger problems, like Paton with his borrowed horse. This highlights the need for us to be asking God to help us and guide us every day, so that little difficulties do not become great problems. David the Psalmist was very

conscious of his need of strength and help from God. "It is God that girdeth me with strength," he said, "and maketh my way perfect" (Psalm 18:32). We should be asking God to do this for us.

S M Campbell

For Younger Readers

The Sick Sailor

She was a good woman who lived in Scotland. We can call her **S**good because she loved God. So she read the Bible to her boy. And she taught him from the Bible. But the boy did not like what his mother taught him. He did not want to learn about God and the things of God. Yet his mother kept on teaching him.

When he was old enough, the boy went away from home and became a sailor. He began working on a ship. For many years he lived a sinful life. He did not think about God.

One of his trips on the sea took this sailor to America. There he became very sick and was taken into hospital. A minister visited him there and spoke to him about the Bible. The sailor still did not like hearing what the Bible says. And he did something very wicked; he swore at the minister and told him to go away.

But the minister did not go away. He noticed the man's name, which was probably above his bed. The minister thought it was perhaps the name of somebody from Scotland and that he would know the Psalms. The minister repeated a verse from Psalm 103:

Such pity as a father hath
unto his children dear;
Like pity shows the Lord to such
as worship Him in fear.

The sailor knew these words at once. He had often heard them from his mother. He started to cry. He told the minister that he was a sinner. He knew that he needed God to forgive him. And God did forgive him.

How good it was that the boy learned verses from the Bible when he was young! But it was very wicked of him to hate hearing what God says in the Bible.

You must ask God to keep you from hating the Bible. Ask Him to make you love this wonderful Book. And ask Him to show you from it how God can forgive your sins.

One thing more. I hope you are learning verses from the Bible. One verse you should learn is the one from Psalm 103 that the minister read to the sick sailor.

Looking Around Us

The Chronophage Clock

A very strange clock has recently been placed on the outside of the new library at Corpus Christi College of Cambridge University. This interesting clock is almost five feet in diameter but has no hands. The time is shown by three lights which tell the hour, minute and second by shining through markers on the face

The most unusual feature of the clock is what is known as its escape movement. It is not hidden inside as those familiar with traditional watches might expect, but it sits outside on top. It is in the shape of a fearsome-looking creature, like a giant grasshopper or locust, almost five feet long, with its mouth open, its tongue moving, and its teeth bared. As it rocks to and fro, its feet release the time second by second. Then every 60 seconds it rolls its eyes and closes its mouth as if eating yet another minute. That is why the maker of the clock, Dr John Taylor, has called it a “chronophage” or “time-eater”. He explained: “I wanted it to depict that . . . once a minute is gone, you can’t get it back”.

How true it is: “Once a minute is gone, you can’t get it back”. Our time in this world is eaten up minute by minute, hour by hour, and is gone for ever. Then, one day, our very last minute will be eaten up. Suddenly we will be in either the happiness of heaven or the misery of hell.

The Book of Ecclesiastes speaks of “a time to be born and a time to die”. We do not know how long we will have between those two times, but we do know that our time is very valuable. So, surely, we ought to make good use of it before it is taken away for ever. The Bible tells us to be “redeeming the time”; that is, we must buy back the time, as it were, so that we do not waste it – so that we make good use of it and benefit from it. Of course, the greatest benefit we can have is to be saved from our sins by believing in the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Without this blessing we cannot have the happiness of heaven.

At what time should you seek this blessing? Many will answer, "Some day away in the future". Then one day they will find that all their days have been eaten up and it is too late. We must listen to what God says: "Now is the day of salvation" (1 Corinthians 6:2). God also states in the same verse, "Now is the accepted time" – as if to say, "Now is the most favourable time, the best time".

Here are two other Bible verses about how we should put our precious time to good use: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10), and: "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).

NMR

On a Sabbath?

It was a radio program discussing the savings that can be made on energy bills. If one switches to another supplier of electricity or gas, for instance, it is possible to get a lower price. A lady with some experience in this area was being interviewed. She advised listeners to take some time on a Sabbath morning (she, of course, used the word *Sunday*, the heathen name for the day) to go over their bank accounts to check how much they were actually paying; then they could discover how much scope there might be for them to save money.

Now, there is no doubt that it would be a useful exercise for many households to find out if they can pay less for their electricity and gas. But is it a good way of spending a Sabbath morning? The lady was, no doubt, thinking that it is a time in the week when people are most likely to have nothing else to do. But, clearly, if we follow the Fourth Commandment and want to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy", we will quickly realise that checking bank accounts is something for another day of the week.

The Sabbath is to be used as far as possible for worshipping God; it is an opportunity to seek God and to get good for our souls. These are far more important activities than trying to save money, however important it may be to many families. It is something that can wait for another day, like the hundreds of other activities which occupy most people on a Sabbath.

This is an age when most people ignore the Sabbath. And they do so because they ignore the God of the Sabbath. But God will not allow anyone to go on for ever ignoring Him and His Sabbath, a day which is set aside for our good. God has given time for us sinners to seek Him, and the Sabbath is a special opportunity for us to do so. Let us use it as He meant it to be used!

Where Christianity May Bring a Death Sentence

Hossein Soodmand was hanged 18 years ago in Iran, after he forsook Islam and turned to Christianity – a step he took when he was just 13. Now his son Ramtin is in jail. He is afraid that, although he was never a Muslim, he will be executed under new religious laws which are expected to come into force soon. Britain did protest against these laws, but the EU has been very quiet, while the United Nations has said nothing.

Iran is a country where Islam wields tremendous power. Ayatollah Khomeini, a former religious and government leader there, even declared that “non-Muslims are impure”, claiming that for Muslims to wash the clothes of non-Muslims, or to eat food with non-Muslims, or even to use dishes touched by non-Muslims, would spoil their purity. How clearly such a statement shows that he did not begin to understand sin properly! For that we need a revelation from God – and we have it in the Bible.

But *we* can go safely to church without fear of being arrested; we can live according to the teachings of the Bible. We have no reason to be afraid that we will be executed, or even sent to prison, just because we are known to be followers of the true religion. How much we should value our privileges! And how earnestly we should seek to profit by them!

The Christian's Firm Bank

I am sure you will have read in the press about the recent “credit crunch” and the difficulties in banking, and have heard people talking about it too. Some institutions, like large international banks, have run into such severe problems that they have had to close down or be taken over. Such news has rocked the financial world with very serious consequences.

But in the midst of all the uncertainty and gloom that these crises have caused, there are spiritual realities and certainties which never change and we may cling to them. A godly minister, Lachlan Mackenzie of Lochcarron, wrote a lovely poem which makes this point. It is called, “The Christian's Firm Bank”. In it he wrote about God as the heavenly Banker who has riches in the gospel to give out to poor, bankrupt sinners. It is well worth reading, thinking over and laying to heart.

JvK

I have a never-failing bank, a more than golden store.
 No earthly bank is half so rich; how can I then be poor?
 'Tis when my stock is spent and gone, and I without a groat,
 I'm glad to hasten to my bank, and beg a little note.

Sometimes my Banker, smiling, says, “Why don’t you oftener come?

And when you draw a little note, why not a larger sum?

Why live so niggardly and poor? Your bank contains plenty.

Why come and take a one-pound note, when you might have twenty?

“Yes, twenty thousand, ten times told, is but a trifling sum

To what your Father has laid up, secure in God, His Son.”

Since then my Banker is so rich, I have no cause to borrow;

I’ll live upon my cash today and draw again tomorrow.

I’ve been a thousand times before and never was rejected;

Sometimes my Banker gives me more than asked for or expected!

Sometimes I’ve felt a little proud I’ve managed things so clever;

But ah, before the day was gone, I’ve felt as poor as ever.

Sometimes, with blushes in my face, just at the door I stand;

I know if Moses kept me back, I surely must be damned.

I know my bank will never break. No, it can never fail;

The firm – three persons in one God, Jehovah, Lord of all!

Should all the banks in Britain break, the Bank of England smash,

Bring in your notes to Sion’s bank, you’ll surely have your cash;

And if you have but one small note, fear not to bring it in;

Come boldly to this throne of grace; the Banker is within.

All forged notes will be refused, man-merits are rejected;

There’s not a single note will pass that God has not accepted.

’Tis only those beloved of God, redeemed by precious blood,

That ever had a note to bring – these are the gift of God.

Though thousand ransomed souls may say they have no notes at all,

Because they feel the plague of sin, so ruined by the fall;

This bank is full of precious notes, all signed and sealed and free;

Though many doubting souls may say, “There is not one for me”.

Base unbelief will lead the child to say what is not true;

I tell the soul that feels self-lost: “These notes belong to you”.

The leper had a little note: “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst!”

The Banker cashed his little note and healed the sickly man.

We read of one young man, indeed, whose riches did abound;

But in the Banker’s book of grace this man was never found.

But see the wretched dying thief hang by the Banker’s side;

He cried, “Dear Lord, remember me”. He got his cash and died.

Price 70p