

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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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, F P Manse, Ferry Road, Leverburgh, Isle of Harris, HS5 3UA; tel: 01859 520271; e-mail: leverburgh@lineone.net. All unsigned articles are by the Editor.

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Spiritual Help From Thomas Watson

One of the most significant years in the history of Scotland and England was 1662. During that year, under Charles II, well over 2000 of the best ministers were put out of the pulpits. It was difficult for many of these men to preach anywhere afterwards, although many of them did preach when they had an opportunity. But they were often in danger of being fined for doing so, or they might be imprisoned or expelled from the country. It was a disaster for the spiritual good of Britain – for the Government was trying to prevent these good men from preaching the good news about the Saviour, which was just what the people most needed to hear.

One of the best known of these ministers was Thomas Watson. Indeed, during the last 50 or so years, there has again been a lot of interest in his books. He had preached in a church in central London for 16 years, and, like many other ministers he delivered his last sermons in his church on 17 August 1662. On that Sabbath afternoon he took as his text: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves . . .” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Watson was anxious to make the most of this last opportunity to encourage his people to live holy lives. So, as he spoke on these words, he gave his congregation 20 pieces of good advice. Here is a summary of them:

1. “Begin the day with God; visit God in the morning before you make any other visit”. So he went on to encourage his people to read the Bible and to pray every day.

2. “Get good books into your homes.” Watson was thinking of a time when his people would no longer have access to sound preaching; then they would need good books as “cisterns that hold the waters of life in them to refresh you”. But even if we have access to sound preaching, we cannot listen to it every day. Yet we can pick up a good book at any time and read it.

3. Take care of the company you keep. Do not be too familiar with sinners when it is not necessary. Watson was afraid of people being tempted to sin through being influenced by ungodly friends. “How many souls”, he exclaimed, “have been ruined . . . in this city by evil company!”

4. “Take heed who you hear and how you hear.” Watson was afraid of

ministers who preach false doctrine, some of whom had “learned the art to mix error with truth, and to give poison in a golden cup”. He wanted his hearers to remember the people of Berea, who were praised because they “searched the Scriptures daily” to see if what Paul was preaching was true. If we do likewise, we will learn to distinguish between what is true to Scripture and what is not, to “put a difference between meat of God’s sending and the devil’s cooking”.

5. Seek to be sincere. Do not be a hypocrite. “Do not be like rowers in a boat that look one way and row another”, warned Watson. By this he meant: Do not seem, by what you profess to be, to look towards heaven – while in fact you are rowing towards hell by what you do. And he goes on: “Do not pretend to love God, and yet love sin”.

6. “Examine whether you have grace or not.” And Watson warns: “Do not think yourselves good because others think so”. He advised his congregation to examine themselves in the light of God’s Word. Because many do not search themselves in this way, he says, they die without ever having really known themselves.

7. Be watchful. We keep a careful eye on those we suspect; so, Watson points out, “your heart is a suspicious person . . . watch it continually”. We should be on guard; so we must not sleep (of course Watson does not mean this literally!) But “our sleeping time is the devil’s tempting time”.

8. God’s people should often come together. This would have been specially useful for people who would no longer be able to meet for public worship. What Watson had in mind was that they would be able to talk together about spiritual things, for the good of their souls.

9. Raise your hearts above the world. A Christian’s heart should be fixed on heaven. Those whose hearts are focused on heaven, not on the things of this world, will not be disturbed by the difficulties of life. Instead they will be “full of joy”.

10. Believers should make much use of the promises in Scripture. Watson says, “The promises are great supports to faith”; they “keep us from sinking when we come into the waters of affliction”; when we meet difficulties.

11. Have “a calling”. Watson means that everyone who is able should have a job, or else they should have something to do that God calls them to in His providence, like looking after their home. He states bluntly that “an idle man is useless”. “The same God who says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy’,” Watson points out, “also says, ‘Six days shalt thou labour’.”

12. “Join the first and second tables of the law together.” We must keep both the first four of the Ten Commandments, which tell us our direct duty to God, and the last six, which tell us our duty to other human beings.

“Every command”, Watson reminds us, “has the same divine stamp and authority as another command has.”

13. “Join the serpent and the dove together.” Watson was thinking of Jesus’ words: “Be . . . wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16). We must have the harmlessness of the dove so that we may not do wrong to others; at the same time we must have the wisdom of the serpent and so avoid others doing harm to us.

14. “Be more afraid of sin than of suffering.” Watson explains: “A man may be afflicted and yet have the love of God; but if he sins, immediately God is angry”. And he offers the illustration: “He that will commit sin to prevent suffering is like a man that lets his head be wounded to save his shield and helmet”.

15. Beware of idolatry. It provokes God. Here he is thinking most about Roman Catholicism and its false teachings.

16. Do not think the worse of godliness just because people criticise it and even persecute it. This is the work of wicked men who are “stirred up by the devil”. Watson concludes this point by saying, “Holiness is a beautiful and glorious thing; it is the angels’ glory, and shall we be ashamed of that which makes us like the angels? There is a time coming when wicked men will be glad of some of that holiness that now they despise, but they shall be as far then from obtaining it as they are now from desiring it.”

17. Do not think the better of sin because it is in fashion. It will be a poor excuse on the day of judgement to say that many other people committed the same sins as you. God will then say, “Seeing you have sinned with the multitude, you will now go to hell with the multitude”.

18. In the matter of religion “serve God with all your might”. We must not be dull or lazy in God’s service. Watson gives this example: “You must not only say a prayer . . . but you must pour out your soul in prayer”. And he asks, “Do you see men zealous and very active for hell, and will you not take pains for heaven?”

19. “Do all the good you can to others as long as you live”. Watson advises: “Labour to be helpful to the souls of others” and supply their needs.

20. “Every day think upon eternity.” Watson shows us the huge difference between heaven and hell: “If you are godly then shall you be for ever happy If you are wicked, you shall be always miserable . . . in the scalding furnace of the wrath of the Almighty. Eternity to the godly is a day that has no sunset; eternity to the wicked is a night that has no sunrise.” Serious thoughts on our eternal condition are “a great means to promote holiness”.

Indeed all these points should help us spiritually. So we ought to ask God to help us remember them and to give us grace to follow them.

Revival at Kilsyth

2. Made to Wait Patiently for the Lord

In the first article of this series we saw that revival broke out in Cambuslang in 1742. But James Robe, the minister in Kilsyth, was concerned that he could not see any fresh work of the Holy Spirit in his own congregation. Yet before many months had passed he knew of at least 300 people who were awakened in Kilsyth to a concern for their souls, though about 100 of them belonged to other congregations. We will now look at the experiences of some of those who were converted during the revival. This article is about a man whom we know only by the initials CD.

This man CD was the first of the Kilsyth people to become convicted about his sins. Robe was then preaching, from Hebrews 8:10, on the work of the Holy Spirit in writing God's law on a sinner's heart. CD realised that the law had *not* yet been written on his heart. In other words, he was not being influenced inwardly by God's law. If the Holy Spirit had written God's law on his heart, he would have been trying to obey it, not only in his outward actions, but also in his words and in his thoughts. But CD realised too that it was absolutely necessary to have God's law written on his heart.

That evening, CD and his landlady talked together about God raising the dead on the last day and about the judgement that will follow. He thought about the dreadful state that wicked people will then be in. Obviously he was including himself among these wicked people, and these thoughts made a deep impression on him. He later told Robe that every sermon he heard at that time made these impressions still deeper. Even so, he felt that his concern about the state of his soul and about where he would spend eternity should have been greater than it actually was. Then, on the last Sabbath of April, he heard about a woman who had been awakened that day to great concern about her soul, and this made him feel even more troubled than before.

Some time later, CD told Robe about the effects of a sermon the minister had preached on May 19. The text was John 16:9, where Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit convincing sinners of their sins, and the particular sin which Jesus mentions is not believing on Himself. CD clearly felt that Robe was describing much of his (CD's) own experience. Robe said that the Spirit usually begins to convince a sinner of the sinfulness of one particular sin and then goes on to convict him of various other sins. This was CD's experience. He was, he said, convinced of "bosom sins" – sins that he particularly loved – and he also felt "the evil nature of sin". What disturbed him was not so much the terrors of hell as the fact that he was offending a holy God. He saw so clearly the evil of unbelief – of refusing to believe in Christ for salvation – that he hated himself for it. He could see that he was sinning, not only when

he did something wrong, but even when the first thought of doing it was forming in his mind.

At the same time he realised that he was not able to deliver himself from the terrible position he was in. He knew that he needed a righteousness that he did not have, and that he had no power to work out a righteousness for himself. But he was also brought to see that Christ and His righteousness were sufficient for the needs of a sinner and CD felt that he was ready to trust in Him, if only he could do so.

CD had never told anyone about what was going on in his soul. What was it then, Robe asked him, that kept him going so long under such trouble of mind? CD replied that, “when his heart was like to burst in prayer”, the words of Psalm 40:1 would always come into his mind: “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry”. This, he said, “encouraged him to wait for the Lord with patience and hope”.

He began to meet with a group of people who gathered for prayer. He asked them what was best for somebody to do who was under conviction of sin. A wise Christian gave him excellent advice: he was to “behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). And it would seem that this is just what, by God’s grace, CD did; he looked by faith to Jesus Christ as the One who had come into the world to offer up Himself as a sacrifice (a lamb) to take sin away.

The next Sabbath, Robe pointed to evidence which should lead people to conclude that they were born again. He referred to such matters as: dedicating ourselves to the Lord, a habit of trying to imitate Jesus Christ, earnest longings after a perfect likeness to Him, and a high value for such things as the Bible, preaching and prayer. As the minister was speaking, CD felt he could see all these evidences (or marks of grace) in himself. And during the prayer after the sermon he felt his whole heart go out in love to Jesus Christ. CD was filled with joy at this love and he was caught up in wonder also.

You might think that everything would be easy for CD after that. He was now clearly converted, and he had himself become certain that God had changed him. Surely he would never have any more difficulties! But everyone who has been converted will have difficulties of one kind or another. Unconverted people do not trust in God, and they are specially unlikely to do so if things seem to be going well for them. If God’s children experience no difficulties, even they will be very liable to trust in themselves; they will not then feel their need to depend on God. It is hugely important for every converted person to “trust in [the Lord] *at all times*” (Psalm 62:8).

And, that very night, CD became disturbed again. He was now afraid that things were not right with his soul after all; he was afraid that it was not a

real work of God's grace that had taken place in his heart and life. But, after going to bed he remembered the words of Hosea 6:3: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth". And he found help in these words; he probably felt encouragement in them to go on following Christ, in the hope that God would supply all his needs. Again CD was filled with joy in the Lord and with wonder at his love to Christ. He even felt that he could do and suffer anything for Jesus Christ, who had done and suffered so much for him.

Here was encouragement for the minister of Kilsyth, who had been so disturbed that no one in his congregation was turning to Christ. Here was evidence of a fresh work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, there are many who seem to begin following Christ, but sooner or later turn back to the world. Yet, more than three months later, in the middle of September, Robe felt he had every reason to believe that CD was still living the kind of life that every true Christian should. He was following "on to know the Lord".

The Scottish Reformation of 1560

1. Scotland Before the Reformation

Rev D W B Somerset

In this series of articles we will describe: (1.) Scotland before the Reformation; (2.) The events leading to the Reformation; (3.) Scotland transformed by the Reformation. These articles are enlarged from a talk to this year's Youth Conference. The subtitle for the talk was, "450 Years of Blessing for Scotland".

Scotland before the Reformation was a country dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. There is a good way in which a country can be dominated by religion, and there is a bad way. It is good if *true* religion has a high place in a country. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland believes in the Establishment Principle: there should be an Established Church in each country which is recognised and protected by the laws of that country. Every nation should be Christian, and in God's appointed time the nations of the world will become Christian: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15). Religion should be prominent and should influence the whole of society. It is a good thing, for instance, if school days and university lectures begin, as they used to, with prayer. Christ is to be honoured in every sphere of life.

But the way in which the Roman Church dominated Scotland was different. It was not by promoting biblical principles but by owning a vast proportion

of the land and the wealth. One of the bishops, Andrew Forman, was so rich that he was able to bribe the Pope in order to get a still better position. People would leave their land to the Church, and the Church never died – she just kept absorbing wealth. It is estimated that half of the wealth of Scotland was in the hands of the Roman Church by the time of the Reformation. The annual income of the Church was about £300 000 while the annual income of the king was only £17 000

Often the wealth of the Church was in the form of “entitlements”. In Aberdeen, for example, with a total population of 4000 in 1560, there were somewhere between 110 and 150 endowed clergy who were *entitled* to a living. This had to come from the rest of the 4000 and from other sources in the area. Roughly every tenth man was a priest, either paid for by the people of Aberdeen or paid for by people outside the city who hardly ever saw him. In Linlithgow, there were 16 altars in the parish church and 228 legal contracts requiring almost every house in Linlithgow to pay for the “maintenance” of these altars – in other words, to pay for the priests who ministered at them.

People were becoming weary of this burden. When the Bishop of Moray demanded his tithe from David Straiton, who fished near Montrose, Straiton told his fishermen to put every tenth fish back in the water and sent a message to the Bishop saying that, if he “wanted his tithe, it were but reason that he might come and receive it where he got the stock”. For this he was charged with heresy, and eventually put to death.

In 1559 those whom Knox called the “rascal multitude” sacked the Greyfriars monastery in Perth (the “Grey thieves” monastery, as Knox calls it), and Knox gave an account of what was found in it. It does not seem very much nowadays but it shows how poor people were and how they resented the Church having everything. “In very deed, the Greyfriars was a place so well provided that unless honest men had seen the same, we would have feared to have reported what provision they had. Their sheets, blankets, beds and covers were such as no earl in Scotland hath the better. Their napery [table linen] was fine. There were but eight persons in the convent, and yet they had 8 puncheons [large barrels] of salt beef, wine, beer, ale, etc. . . . Consider the time of year, the eleventh of May (when everybody else’s winter stores were used up). . . . The spoil was permitted [given] to the poor.”

This vast wealth had two effects. One was that it attracted the most ambitious people into the Church in pursuit of power and money, and this led to ever-increasing corruption. The other effect was a growing resentment against the Church, not only among the poor, but also among the nobility, who saw their power being seized by the churchmen. This was a major factor preparing the way for the Reformation.

Unconverted People Hate God

W S Plumer

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. Plumer was a well-known minister in America. The text for this sermon was: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Sin is no trifle. It is not an honest mistake. It is wickedness. It is the complete opposite of all that is lovely in the character of God. If it does not break forth in crimes, yet the carnal mind – the heart of someone who is not born again – is enmity against God. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." All that is of the world is opposed to God.

The words of the text are very strong. They do not say that the natural heart of man has some shyness towards God, but that it is an enemy to God; it hates God, His will, His law, His nature. Nothing is more contrary to anything else than the carnal heart to the Most High. It does not consent to the law that it is good; it does not delight in the law; it does not submit to the law. The will of the carnal mind is hostile to the will of God. It is not subject to His law, *neither indeed can be*. Sin cannot be pleased with holiness. A vile heart perverts or opposes all that is pure. Love obeys God; hatred denies Him and resists Him and rejects Him. Let us think of these things.

1. People prove their hatred to God by their dislike of sound knowledge about Him. Twice in the history of this world – once in Adam's family and once in Noah's – everyone on earth had true knowledge of the true God. But they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. When they knew God they glorified Him not as God. For thousands of years God has raised up great numbers of able and faithful men, who have zealously told the truth about God and His will. Yet many, even in Christian lands, do not know God savingly. This great fact can only be explained if people hate God.

2. People show their hatred to God by the way they treat His name. They often take it in vain. They mingle it with oaths and curses. They use it in jokes, vile songs and mockery. Never is the name of any pest of society used lightly as often as the name of God. Not even a man who involved his country in civil war, or led his people into a ruinous war abroad, is ever named with such hatred as God. In every city and town, more slanders are spoken against God than against all others. When I come to a new place I am often struck by the fact that the very first word I hear expresses contempt for God. I have sometimes remained an hour or a day in such a place without hearing one word spoken against anyone except the name of God.

3. People prove their hatred to God by not wanting to see Him glorified. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father loved him so much, they hated

him and could not speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4). And when his prophetic dreams told of his coming greatness, they hated him still more and envied him (Genesis 37:8, 11). The higher he rose, the worse was their hatred. So sinners are grieved when God is honoured. "When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that [Jesus] did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased" (Matthew 21:15). Why? Not because He had taught any error or done anyone any harm, but because they hated Him with a cruel hatred. If they had loved Him, they would have been glad to see others honour Him.

4. People show their enmity to God by hating His law and His rule. They will not have Him to reign over them. Everyone on earth, unless he has God's grace, willingly breaks the spirit of the moral law, and every part of it, every day. Where is the unrenewed man who loves the Sabbath as a holy day of rest to the Lord? Where is the carnal mind that does not covet whatever it fancies? Very few wicked people seriously profess any love to God's law, or declare that they always try to meet its demands, or express sorrow when they fail to obey it.

5. If people did not hate God, they would not hate His people. A child of God knows that he has passed from death unto life because he loves the brethren. But from the time of Cain, God's people have been hated, hunted, slandered and murdered till the earth is ready to disclose their blood almost everywhere. The path of every saint has been soaked with his tears for the wickedness of the wicked. Since Christ went up to heaven, more than 50 million human beings have suffered violent deaths because they professed to follow the Saviour. If men loved God, they would not hate His people.

6. People prove that they hate God by hating His character, especially what is merciful in His nature. Godly people rejoice that God is almighty, knows everything and is present everywhere. But the wicked do not. The cry of the carnal heart is: "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us" (Isaiah 30:11). And when God displays His rich mercy in saving many sinners, bringing them to hope in His Son, the fleshly mind (unless restrained by God) rises up in great wrath. How vile must the heart be that hates a pure revival of gospel holiness. Yet even one sound conversion may stir up frightful malice. I have known a minister well received by a family when he went to preach a sermon at the death of a godless youth, but coldly repulsed when he went to tell the conscience-stricken sister what she must do to be saved.

7. When people are unthankful for God's many and great mercies, they show their hatred of Him. These mercies relate to soul and body, to health and friends, to life and all things. They cannot be counted up. The best of them cost the life of the Saviour. All of them are the fruits of His kindness.

Yet many people daily sit down to a table loaded with good things and never even in words give thanks to God; others give thanks in words, but by their wicked lives clearly show that they have no real love to God.

8. But on this solemn matter God's Word is clear. Asaph, Nathan, David and Paul speak of the haters of the Lord (Psalm 81:15), of the enemies of the Lord (2 Samuel 12:14), of the enemies of the King (Psalm 45:5), and of the haters of God (Romans 1:30). Many other texts teach the same thing. "He that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death" (Proverbs 8:36). Again, "Whosoever . . . will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Paul states it as certain that, before conversion, Jews and Gentiles were enemies (Romans 5:10). Our Lord Himself made the same charge: "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. He that hateth Me, hateth My Father also" (John 15:23,24).

This enmity against God is untiring and unmixed. It is mortal. It had rather die than love God. If it could, it would dethrone the Almighty.

Lessons: 1. We see what sin is. It is war with God; it is dreadful wickedness.

2. It will be just in God to punish those who thus hate Him. He pronounces no curse against the ungodly beyond what justice demands.

3. Everyone must be born again or perish. They are enemies to God in their minds and by wicked works. They can never see Him in peace unless they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, unless their enmity is slain and love is planted in their hearts. How can God's foes come confidently into His presence if they do not submit to Him on earth? Baptism will save no soul; nor will seeing visions, hearing voices or professing flaming love. Only a real, inward, mighty, thorough spiritual change will meet our need. That change must take place soon. Before long it will be said: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Revelation 22:11).

4. We are not saved by finite power. Sinners "are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear; which will nor hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (Psalm 58:4,5). It requires more than sweet music to raise the dead. Human power is not strong enough to save a soul. God must do the whole work, or it will not be done.

5. Truly God is love. No king ever had such bitter enemies. Yet no king ever made such gracious offers to his best friends as God makes to His worst enemies. He gives us food, clothes, shelter and friends as if we deserved them. In providing a Saviour, His goodness surpasses all other love. "For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And how long He continues His offers of pardon and mercy! He endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. O sinner, turn and live.

For Younger Readers

David, Goliath and Charles

Do you remember the story in the Bible about David and Goliath? Goliath was a big, strong man. He was far bigger and far stronger than everyone else. He was a giant.

David was not a giant. He was just a boy. He came to Israel's army. His brothers were soldiers in Israel's army, and David brought them some food.

Goliath was in the Philistine army, and the Philistine army was fighting against Israel. David heard Goliath shouting to the men in Israel's army. He was asking any soldier in Israel's army to come and fight with him. Nobody went. They were all afraid. They all knew that Goliath was much stronger than they were.

But David was not afraid. Yes, Goliath was much stronger than David. But David knew that God could help him. And God is much, much stronger than any man, even Goliath.

David offered to go and fight with Goliath. Goliath had a big sword, but David had no sword. David was looking to God for help.

He just took his sling and chose five smooth stones from a little river. David placed a stone in his sling. He fired the stone and it went straight to where Goliath was standing. It hit Goliath on his forehead and he fell down dead. Israel's army was now safe.

So David was very good at firing stones with his sling? Yes, he was. But there was something far more important about what happened. David trusted in God, and God helped him.

One day a boy called Charles was reading to his mother from the Bible. He was reading the story about David and Goliath. He thought it was a wonderful story. He really wished he could have done what David did. He told his mother, "I wish I had lived in these old times, or that there were Goliaths to kill nowadays".

Charles' mother said nothing as she turned over the pages of the Bible till she came to Proverbs, chapter 16. She read verse 32 to Charles: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city".

Charles became angry very easily, and he knew he was doing

wrong. Here was something for him to kill – his anger, not Goliath.

Goliath was strong, or mighty. But it is better to be slow to get angry than to be mighty. If you are able to rule your spirit, you will not become angry. If Charles would rule his spirit and not get angry, that was something far better than to kill Goliath, or even to capture a whole city. This is what Charles's mother was wanting to tell him.

Did you get angry easily? Then ask God to help you rule your spirit. Ask Him to keep you from getting angry.

Only One Way of Salvation

2. Because of What Man Is

J C Ryle

This is the second part of a series taken from Ryle's book, *Knots Untied*, and is based on the verse: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It has been edited. The first part answered the question: What does this mean?

Let me now supply some reasons why the teaching of the text must be true. I might cut this short by one simple argument: "God says so". "One plain text," said a minister long ago, "is as good as a thousand reasons." But I will not do this. I wish to meet the objections that may rise in many hearts against this doctrine, pointing out the strong foundations on which it stands.

Let me say, for one thing, the teaching of the verse must be true because *man is what man is*. Now what is man? There is one broad, sweeping answer, which takes in the whole human race: man is a sinful being. All children of Adam born into the world, whatever their name or nation, are corrupt, wicked and defiled in the sight of God. Their thoughts, words, ways and actions are all, more or less, defective and imperfect.

Is there any country on the face of the globe where sin does not reign? Is there some happy valley, some far-away island, where innocence is to be found? Is there any tribe on earth where – far away from civilisation and business and money and gunpowder and luxury and books – goodness and purity flourish? No, there is none. Look over all the voyages and travels of explorers that you can lay your hands on, from Columbus down to Cook and from Cook to Livingstone, and you will see the truth of what I claim. Think of the loneliest islands of the Pacific Ocean, cut off from the rest of the world, whose peoples knew nothing about Rome and Paris, London and Jerusalem. But these islands, even when first discovered, were found to be full of

impurity, cruelty, and idolatry. The footprints of the devil have been traced on every shore. The testimony to the Fall of man, in the third chapter of Genesis, has been established everywhere. Whatever else savages do not know about, they always know about sin.

But are there no men and women in the world who are free from this corruption of nature? Have there not been, every now and then, some high-minded beings who have lived faultless lives? Have there not been some, if only a few, who have done all that God requires and thus proved that sinless perfection is a possibility? No, there have been none. Look over the lives of the holiest Christians; mark how the brightest and best of Christ's people have always had the deepest sense of their own corruption. They groan, they mourn, they sigh, they weep over their own shortcomings; it is one of the common grounds on which they meet. Patriarchs and apostles, Martin Luther and John Calvin, John Knox and John Bradford, Samuel Rutherford and George Whitefield, Henry Martyn and Robert M'Cheyne – all alike agreed in feeling their own sinfulness. The more light they have, the more humble Christ's people seem to be; the more holy they are, the more they seem to feel their own unworthiness.

Now what does all this seem to prove? To my eyes it seems to prove that human nature is so tainted and corrupt that, left to himself, no one could be saved. Man's case appears hopeless without a Saviour – and a mighty Saviour too. There must be a Mediator, an Advocate, an atonement, to make such poor sinful beings acceptable with God; and I find this nowhere except in Jesus Christ. Heaven for man without an almighty Redeemer, peace with God for man without a divine Intercessor, eternal life for man without an eternal Saviour; in one word, salvation without Christ – all these appear utter impossibilities in the face of the plain facts about human nature.

I lay these things before thinking people, and I ask them to consider them. I know it is one of the hardest things in the world to realise the sinfulness of sin. To *say* we are all sinners is one thing; to have an idea of what sin must be in the sight of God is quite another. Sin is too much part of ourselves to allow us to see it as it is: we do not feel our inability to keep God's law. We may think some creatures are horrible, but they are not so to themselves or to one another. Just in the same way our corruption is part of ourselves, and at our best we understand very little of it.

But we may be sure of this: if we could see our lives as the angels do who never fell, we should never doubt this point for a moment. In a word, no one can really know what man is and not see that the teaching of our text must be true. We are shut up to the Apostle Peter's conclusion. There can be no salvation except by Christ.

*For Junior Readers***“While He Was Yet Young . . .”**

“**W**hile he was yet young, he began to seek after . . . God” (2 Chronicles 34:3).

Who was this? He was young Josiah, king of Judah. I am sure you remember that he became king when he was only eight years old. Then we are told that, in the eighth year of his reign, he began to seek the Lord – when he was still young, still a teenager, he was seeking the Lord.

We recently had a sermon on this text in our congregation. The minister specially addressed the children and young people who were there. I would like to tell you a little of what he said:

1. “*While he was yet young.*” This is true of some of you: you are still young! Josiah was seeking the Lord when he was only a teenager. He lived in dark times. His father Amon had been a wicked king, and his advisers would probably not have been sympathetic when Josiah began to seek the true God. Yet Josiah began to seek God in spite of these difficulties.

What about you? You probably have every encouragement in your family and in the church to seek the Lord. Will you not follow Josiah’s example when you are yet young? When you are young is the best time. “My son [or daughter], give Me thine heart”, is what God says to you in His Word.

2. *You will not always be young.* When you are full of youthful energy, it is hard for you to believe that you will ever get old. But the Bible tells us that “childhood and youth are vanity”; they are empty and they quickly pass. It is a mistake to think that you have many years ahead of you, and so you can enjoy life to the full and forget God while you are young. God is saying, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth”.

Remember that nothing is certain in this life. You may put religion out of your mind and think that you have many years ahead of you, but that is a fatal mistake. Childhood and youth pass away so quickly and you cannot be certain that you will see old age. So, while you are yet young, may you begin to seek the Lord.

3. To the young we say, *Seek the God of your fathers*; seek the salvation of your soul.

Why should you seek Him? God tells you in His Word, “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). The sinner is then called to “return unto the Lord; and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Think also of David’s words to Solomon: “Know thou the God of thy

father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. . . . If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever” (1 Chronicles 28:9). It is an absolute certainty: “He will be found of thee”. The Lord Jesus has an interest in the young and in the little children. He is the same Saviour who said, “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God”. Remember also the words of Psalm 34:

“O children, hither do ye come, and unto Me give ear;
I shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear.”

May it be true of every young person here that you will seek the Lord. If you do so, He will be found of you.

J van Kralingen

“It Is Time to Seek the Lord”

A minister was crossing a field on his way back to his home in London. He met one of the Sabbath school teachers from his church, who told him: “I have been looking for you everywhere. There is a poor little girl very ill, and she wants to see you very much.”

The teacher had met the girl’s mother in a shop. The mother asked if she knew where the minister lived and said, “My girl is very ill, and she will not give me any peace till I find him out. She says she wants to see him at once.”

The minister went right away to see the girl. He had to go through some narrow streets, then into a dirty court and finally into one where the houses on opposite sides of the road were so close that he could not see the sky.

The girl’s house was not a pleasant one. It was dirty and there was a bad smell. Rags were stuffed into the broken window panes and there were just one or two old stools to sit on. The children were crying and quarrelling, while a woman was rowing them in a loud voice and swearing at them.

When the minister went into the girl’s room, he found it so dark that at first he could see almost nothing. Then, as his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he noticed a small bed in a corner. There was no mattress, just a little straw for the girl to lie on, and a piece of dirty sacking for a blanket.

She was about 13 and, when she saw the minister, she raised herself up on her bed, stretched out her thin hands to him and said, “I am so glad to see you. I have been wanting to see you so long.”

“How is this?” he asked. “I do not know you.”

“But I know you! I heard you preach and I wanted to see you.”

“Where did you hear me preach?”

Then she told him her story: “I have been ill for a long time, and one

Sabbath afternoon I felt weary and ill, and I tried every place in the room but I could not rest. And Mother said, 'Why can't you sit still? You had better go out and take a walk.' So I went out and I walked down Whitechapel till I was very tired, and I wanted to sit down and rest. I did not like to sit down on the street. Just then I came to a church and I thought that, if I went in there, I should find a place to sit down. It was your church, and you were preaching to the Sabbath school children. The text was: 'It is time to seek the Lord'. I thought, as I listened to the sermon, 'I am very ill. I get weaker every day. Perhaps I shall die soon. It is time for *me* to seek the Lord.' So I did seek Him and I hope I have found Him, and I am so happy. I wanted to see you, to thank you and to tell you how happy I am."

Afterwards the minister asked her many questions; he believed that she had indeed found the Saviour. It was clear that the Lord had taught her by His Word and Spirit, for she had no one else to teach her. She spent a lot of time reading her little New Testament.

The minister asked a good woman in his congregation to visit the girl and he came back himself several times to speak to her. He came to see her one last time, but the little bed in the corner was empty. "On Saturday", the mother explained, "I was peeling potatoes by the window and she called, 'Mother'. I went to her, and she raised herself up in the bed and put her arms around my neck and said, 'Mother, I want to speak to you and I want to kiss you. I am going to die, but I am so happy.'"

She asked her mother to go to hear the minister preach, to ask her father to go also, and to let her brothers go to the Sabbath school. Then she lay back on her bed. Her mother went on peeling potatoes. But when she turned round, she found that her daughter had died.

A few days later, the minister decided to visit the mother. Perhaps, he thought, he could help her. He knocked several times on the door but there was no answer. Then a woman looked out of a nearby window. "The father has been sent to prison," she told the minister, "and the mother and children went away in the night, and no one knows what has become of them." The minister could see how awful this would have been for the ill girl. But God had taken her to heaven, and he felt thankful for that.

Perhaps you have heard a sermon on the words: "It is time to seek the Lord". But did you seek Him? These words have again been drawn to your attention – with the example of a girl who heard them just once and obeyed. Do not put off seeking Him. It may soon be too late. In any case, if you do not seek the Lord now, it is likely to be more difficult for you in the future. Your heart will be harder; you will have committed many sins that you might otherwise have avoided. God is telling *you* now: "It is time to seek the Lord".

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2009-10

Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Auke de Boer. *Barnoldswick:* Philip J Martin, Robert Ross. *Bonar Bridge:* Elizabeth Campbell. *Bulawayo:* Nozilohlo Bebe, Prudence Chibonda, Khulekani, Shylet and Sithandazile Dube, Sukoluhle Khumalo, Sazisani and Sothile Moyo, Pink Ncube, Nonhlanla Nkomo. *Chesley:* Jenny Bouman, Ruth Schuit, Rachel Winkels, Audrey Zekveld. *Edinburgh:* Eilidh Logan, Isla and Jonathan Macdonald. *France:* Julia Davenel. *Gisborne:* Heidi, Herman and Trudy Haringa, Kirsten and Louise van Dorp. *Grafton:* Cameron White, Chloe van Dorp. *Holland:* Jelle Bakker. *Glasgow:* Kate Gillies, Rachel MacLeod. *Inverness:* Anna Fraser, Thomas D Maton. *King's Lynn:* Joanna Wiltshire. *Longcot:* Lucy Cooper. *North Uist:* John A Macdonald. *Queensland:* Mary Brigden. *Sengera:* Paul Lumumba. *Stornoway:* Sarah K Gillies. *Swindon:* Alison Tugwell. *Sydney:* James Marshall. *Vatten:* Rebecca Fleming.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Dieuwe de Boer, Bianca Jago, Laura McCrae, Amy Thomas. *Barnoldswick:* David Martin. *Bulawayo:* Blessing Mlozi. *Chesley:* Jacob Zekveld. *Dingwall:* Andrew Macleod, Ruth M MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Catriona Logan, Daniel MacDonald. *Faringdon:* Pip Sayers. *Gairloch:* Rachel Mackenzie, Mairi Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Anne-Marie Geuze, William Haringa. *Glasgow:* Ruairidh Macleod, Callum and Peter Macpherson. *Grafton:* Bethany McAlpine. *Holland:* Gerben Bakker, Nathalie MacDonald. *Inverness:* Peter Schouten. *King's Lynn:* Matthew Wiltshire. *London:* Amy van Kralingen. *Longcot:* Ruth Cooper. *Luton:* Stephen Kingham. *North Uist:* Fraser Macdonald. *Queensland:* Rachel Brigden. *Sengera:* Bonface Isoc, Finlay Mogari, Jane Nyabuto, Vane Omweno, Ondari Onang'o, Christine Ogoro, Dickson Ontiri, Dominic, Eric and Mary Onwong'a, Drusillah and Moses Oenge, Stephen Onyanacha, Eunice Rabiki, Gideon Ratemo. *Sidecup:* Jeremy and Lucy Turnbull. *Stornoway:* Iain Boyd. *Stratherrick:* Ewen Fraser. *Sydney:* Keith Marshall. *Texas:* Anna Smith. *Trowbridge:* Joanna Broome. *Vatten:* Sabrina Annand, Cameron Rose.

Junior Section: *Auckland:* Anne Roos de Boer, Rita de Bruin, Lachlan McCrae. *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Bulawayo:* Thandazani Dube, Mitchel and Natash Makwezwa, Respect Ncube. *Chesley:* Samuel Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Rebecca and Sarah Mack. *Dingwall:* Graham J MacLeod. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle Macdonald, Emma G Norris. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie, Catherine Wyatt. *Gisborne:* Annika and Emma van Dorp. *Glasgow:* Rebecca Macleod, Kenneth J Macpherson. *Grafton:* Chelsie and Jackie Cameron, Joshua Kidd, Alexandra van Dorp, Abraham Wallis. *Holland:* Samantha MacDonald. *Inverness:* John and Rebekah M Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew and Sam Munns. *Longcot:* Samuel Cooper. *Mbuma:* Mbiko Masuku. *Sengera:* Josinah Aboki, Bonface Ang'asa, Mwango Aska, Duke Bernard, Dennis Casiano, Gesare Daudi, Judith Gesare, Kembero Kebwaro, Mokua and Nyakundi Kenyatta, Macdonald Matara, Jackson and Rodha Mokoro, Justine Mokua, Truus Moraa, Truus Mosiria, Christine Mosoti, Cicilia, Donald, Edina and Evans Nyabuto, Bernard Nyakwara, Rebecca Nyamao, Mary Nyamwembe, Adams and Dennis Nyang'au, Joseph Obiye, Griffin Okioga, Christine and Nyakwara Ombura, Joseph Onang'o, Vincent Ondieki, Priscah Onduso, Samuel Ontiri, Wycliffe Oenge, Dolvine Orina, Jane Ouko, Rusiah Rabiki, Evans and Nehemiah Torori. *Sidecup:* Jemima Turnbull. *Staffin:* Neil Matheson, Carey Ross. *Stornoway:* Cirsty E Gillies, Aimee Macleod, Eilidh Macleod. *Sydney:* Duncan Marshall, Anna van Dorp. *Texas:* Gerrit Smith. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Nathan Broome. *Vatten:* Jayne-Anne Fleming. *Wisconsin:* Calvin Smith.

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Looking Around Us

Television's Dangers

Researchers in Seattle have concluded that children under two should not watch any TV. And older children should watch only two hours a day. These researchers are concerned about the danger of stimulating children's brains too much. The youngsters who watched most television were most likely to be restless, to have problems in concentrating and to be easily confused.

But television has serious dangers for others, not only those whose brains are in the early stages of development. Much of what is broadcast is not safe viewing for anyone – when, for instance, bad language is used and all kinds of sins are made to appear attractive. Everything we do should be to the glory of God, and we cannot glorify God by watching what is sinful. More generally, if you watch entertainment programmes, they distract you from treating life seriously; you are wasting precious time, which could be much more profitably used. Even serious programmes, useful though they may be, call for a degree of caution because they will be presented from a godless point of view.

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