

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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The Young People’s Magazine

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Power

Some of us are used to seeing the power of the wind as it drives huge waves across the sea, causing them to crash, in clouds of spray, against the rocks. We may also see the power of water – in a fast flowing river, for instance, or a flood that sweeps everything before it. These forces can be dangerous and cause enormous damage, but wind and water can also be very useful; for example, they can generate electricity and keep the lights shining in thousands of homes.

We should be conscious that it is God who created these natural forces. Yet His curse has fallen on this sinful world. So what is very useful in some circumstances – think of wind and water – may in other situations be highly dangerous. But we should remember that God is in control of everything that happens. We should ask Him for His blessing on all the benefits He gives us, and ask Him to protect us from all the dangers around us.

We should be especially ready to see God's power in spiritual things. Nothing is more difficult to move than a human heart; it is a fallen heart, a sinful heart; it can only be turned from its sinful desires by God's power. Unconverted sinners do not want to turn to God; the Bible tells us that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). The *carnal mind* means the mind of the flesh – that is, the human mind in its unconverted state, when it has not been changed by the Spirit.

Strong language is used here; we are *not* told that the carnal mind dislikes God a little, but that it is hostile; it hates Him. And that kind of hatred cannot be removed by human effort, not even by the most powerful preacher who has ever proclaimed God's truth to sinners – not Paul or Peter, not Martin Luther or John Knox. Many sinners were indeed converted through their ministries, but that was the result of the Holy Spirit applying the preached Word of God to their hearts. The power was God's, not the preacher's.

Sinners may find the thought of heaven somewhat attractive; at least they do not want to go to hell. But it is another matter altogether to seek salvation earnestly – the salvation which will fit them for heaven. Sinners are not really willing to seek earnestly unless they are moved by the power of the Holy

Spirit. Sinners may be prepared to go through the motions of religious activity; they may utter words of prayer; they may take up the Bible and read a part of it; they may attend public worship. But there is no spiritual activity in their souls unless the Holy Spirit is at work within them. There is no proper response to the truths of God's Word, no sincere worship, no expression of living desire for the things of God. There is no spiritual life; if you could look into the soul you would see nothing but spiritual death.

Yet in every generation there are people who do love God and worship Him, who trust in Christ, who express living desires to God in prayer, who hate sin. All this is the result of God's power. In Jerusalem, just 10 days after Jesus ascended to heaven, large numbers of people had gathered, not only from the city itself, but also from many other parts around the Mediterranean Sea. Perhaps there was nothing particularly forceful about the manner in which Peter and the other disciples addressed the people. But as they spoke, the Holy Spirit came and worked powerfully in many hearts.

First of all, they were convinced of sin – they were “pricked [or pierced] in their heart” – so that they cried out to Peter and the rest of the apostles: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). They had reached an end of their own resources; they knew that they needed direction from God's messengers. Peter told them that they must repent; he meant that they must turn from their sins and look to Christ Jesus, who was crucified. God's power was indeed present; the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of many; 3000 people repented and looked by faith to Christ, taking Him as their Saviour from sin. It is by the same power that God has worked in the hearts of sinners throughout the ages.

There was once a minister in Texas called Daniel Baker. When his son William was still young, he became concerned about his soul. It may have seemed very impressive to see the lad become so religious but, sadly, these impressions were not saving and they faded away. That is what Jesus illustrated in the Parable of the Sower when He spoke about the seed sown on the stony ground and among the thorns; it looked impressive for a time but it all withered away. A greater power was needed if William was to be rescued from Satan's kingdom.

Not only did William become careless about his soul, he largely rejected true religion. He once told his father plainly that he could never believe in a religion which would send to hell a well-known poet whom he mentioned (perhaps his father had made some such remarks when the poet died, appearing still to reject the truth about God). Baker tried to reason with William, but unsuccessfully. At last the father told him: “Well, my son, I hope you will be converted yet”, and added, probably unwisely, “Aye, and

become a preacher too". It is better to leave it to the Lord to put ideas about the ministry into young men's minds.

Baker went on to comment on the natural "enmity of the human heart". And at that moment, this enmity began to rise up in his son's heart; William replied forcefully: "I had rather be a ditcher than a preacher".

Yet within about four weeks, William was experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit convincing him of sin; no doubt his father had been praying earnestly for him. No power except God's could have made someone, who had been so strongly opposed to the truth, to feel the authority of His law and to acknowledge that he was a sinner. But it is the same power that is needed to bring anyone to acknowledge that he or she is a sinner, for "the carnal mind [in everyone] is enmity against God".

William's convictions ran very deep; he was almost in despair. One day he went from church straight to his bedroom. There he spent some time in prayer. Then he went into the dining-room, where his father and mother were sitting. He told his father: "I can't be converted".

"O yes, my son, you can," his father told him, for he well knew that Jesus Christ "is able to save to the uttermost".

"No, pa, my heart is so hard that I can't be converted."

"Why, my son, the blessed Jesus is able and willing to do everything for you", his father assured him.

Daniel Baker describes what happened next: "It seems to have been a new thought. The way of salvation was made plain, and he was enabled to receive Christ as offered in the gospel."

In a few moments a sweet smile came over William's face. It was clear to his father and mother what had happened, and soon Baker asked: "My son, are you not willing to be a preacher now?"

Back came the answer: "I would be willing to be a ditcher for Christ's sake". It showed that he was now submitting to the will of God.

Again it is clear how much William needed God's power, even when he seemed to be thoroughly convinced of sin. Even then he could not believe; faith is the gift of God. So it was by the power of the Holy Spirit that he believed in Jesus.

It is by the same power that sinners today believe in the Saviour. None of us have that power of ourselves; so we must pray for that power. That is why we are told: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6,7). Do not let the devil try to tell you that there is no point in seeking salvation.

*For Junior Readers***“Striving to Be Saved”**

“**H**elp! Help!” shouted Walter. He was desperately trying to attract the attention of two men on the shore as the strong current swept him out to sea. His home was on the coast and he was used to swimming in the sea. So by the age of 17 he was a strong swimmer.

This time he had swam out for a long distance and, when he turned round to come back, he was caught by the current. He tried hard to swim against it but soon realised that he was not making any progress. Worse than that, he was beginning to tire with the effort. When he started to weaken, he knew he could not keep this up for much longer.

Thankfully the workmen heard his shouts and waded in to the water to help him. They were able to pull him in to the safety of the shallow water where his feet could touch the bottom. What a relief that was!

The next day one of his friends congratulated him on being rescued. He wanted to know how Walter felt when he thought he was going to drown. “I had but one thought that I was conscious of,” he replied, “striving to be saved.” That was the focus of his whole mind and efforts. His one desire was to be saved.

What about you? In your journey through this life there are many currents that could carry you away and prevent you from landing safely in eternity. There is your own wicked heart, which has a terrible dislike for God's commandments; it will try to steer you in the direction of sin. There are the temptations of worldly friends who do not understand religion or what is right or wrong. There is peer pressure, the fear of being different from those around you.

There are many, many distractions in our day to take up your time and attention. They prevent you from focusing on the “one thing needful”. If you realise at all how dangerous all these currents are, will you not be “striving to be saved” as Walter was?

Walter had to leave his home in the north of Scotland to do further study, first in Aberdeen and then in Edinburgh. When he did so, he too came face to face with temptations. But he had been brought up by godly parents, and there were two things he never gave up. One was private prayer and the other was Sabbath-keeping. By prayer he was in the habit of asking God to lead him into the truth, and through his Sabbath-keeping he had the privilege of hearing sermons and reading good books. These helped him to swim against the currents with which he was struggling.

The Lord heard Walter’s prayers and, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, he came to believe Christ. But he had to give up his studies at university in his third year, to return home because he was ill. He died at the age of just 21. But it was a great comfort to his parents that they could say of him afterwards what was written of Abraham: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9). Like Abraham, Walter went to heaven

What about you? Are you using all the means of grace to help you strive to be saved? You do not know how much time you have left in this world. If you were taken to eternity, would you be safe on its shore as Walter was? The Bible tells you exactly what you must do: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” – strive as in agony, the margin of the Bible says. Strive to be saved, as Walter did. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.”

J van Kralingen

“One More Exact Translation”

5. The Right Principles

Matthew Vogan

This Youth Conference paper tells some of the story behind the Authorised Version of the Bible, which was first published exactly 400 years ago, in 1611. Last month’s article described the right text, the copies in Hebrew and Greek from which this version was translated.

Once the right Hebrew and Greek texts have been identified, translators must decide on the principles that will govern their work. Will they try to reproduce the original as fully as possible or will they try to smooth out anything that might not be clear to readers? The principle governing the production of the Authorised Version was to give the divine original as fully as possible. One of the original rules given to the translators was that it should be “as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek”.

Faithfulness. God inspired every word of Scripture, and so every word must be translated faithfully and accurately. Man is to live by “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), not simply the overall sense of Scripture but its individual words. Every word is important.

Many modern versions do not translate word for word but rather thought for thought. The New International Version translators explain that they aimed at “more than a word-for-word translation”, seeking “fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers”. This means changing the text during translation by

imposing upon it a particular interpretation of what they think the writer must have meant. This means that the translator is rewriting Scripture, making an educated guess at how the writers might have expressed themselves if they had written in our time and culture. But this denies the truths: (1) that God sovereignly selected and shaped the cultures and the people by whom the Scriptures were originally given, and (2) that He could ensure they would be put into a form that could be carried across languages and cultures.

In some passages, various interpretations are possible which are not resolved by the grammar of the Greek original. When the AV translators handled them, they refused to impose a translation which would favour one single interpretation above other possibilities. They stated their principle like this: "We have not thought that the indefinite sense ought to be defined".

The translators carefully considered Hebrews 13:3: "Remember . . . them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body". The general principle taught here is to remember those in affliction, "as even yourselves enduring adversity with them" or "as being even human yourselves" and subject to a fellow feeling and to similar experiences. But the translators noted that the most literal rendering would be "as being yourselves also in a body" and chose such words in order not to narrow down the options of interpretation and the range of meaning.

The translators of the AV put their scholarship into producing a translation which was as accurate as possible rather than interpreting the text for the reader. They used the margin in order to include possible alternatives or more woodenly-literal phrasing. We can see an example of their use of the margin in order to supply a secondary or fuller meaning to the words translated in the text in Hebrews 5:7. This verse speaks of the prayers offered by Christ in the days of his flesh, and that he was heard "in that he feared". The Greek word translated *feared* could mean fear, reverence or piety. The word translated *in that* can mean from, after, out of, or because of (what he feared). Various interpretations are therefore possible.

The translation *in that he feared* allows both the interpretation that Christ was heard in the expression of his fears and that he was heard because of his reverential, Godward fear. The latter is reinforced by the marginal note, "or for his piety". The New King James Version asserts without alternative: "because of his godly fear". Whether or not this is the correct interpretation, it is clear that here, as in many other places, the AV translators with a careful reverence for the Word, shrank from imposing it upon the text as the only possibility.

Fullness. Modern versions do not provide every word of the original inspired text. There are certain words that the translators have deemed to be unnecessary and meaningless or which (in their opinion) get in the way. They

have therefore refused to translate them. It is not only looser versions such as the NIV which do this, however. The New King James leaves out many important words, such as *behold*. A small word such as *and* can have crucial significance but it is regularly omitted in hundreds of places. Some phrases also are removed altogether. But it is not for translators to decide what is worthwhile translating and what is not; the Holy Spirit has given every word for a reason and we ought not to seek to be wiser than He.

Honesty. The AV uses italics to identify occasional words added by the translators in order to make the verse grammatical in English. The words in italics do not correspond exactly to words in the original but are essential to make the meaning clear. If we read Psalm 12:5, for instance, without the italics, it would say: “I will set in safety puffeth at him”. The italics supply the meaning: “I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him”.

But most modern versions do not use italics. In versions such as the NIV it would be impossible because it does not seek to follow the original word-for-word; so many words are added in paraphrasing the meaning. It is more honest for a translation to make clear which words directly correspond to the original and which have been added. The NKJV uses italics for this purpose but it does not always put added words in italics – which undermines this function (for example Mark 9:18 “at the mouth”; Romans 7:5 “aroused”; Romans 13:9 “commandments”; 2 Corinthians 11:29 “with indignation”).

Biblical English. The English language was still undergoing significant change in the early seventeenth century and so the AV translators deliberately used grammatical forms common in previous generations but then dropping out of current use. These not only accurately reflected the forms of the original but gave the translation a distinctive character. The truth is that the AV never used current speech, even when first published. This is because it put into English as much as possible of the patterns, phrases, terms and word order of the original. A T Robertson wrote: “No one today speaks the English of the King James Version, or ever did, for that matter . . . it reproduces to a remarkable extent the spirit and language of the Bible”.

Transparency. The AV therefore has a transparency which makes it possible for the reader to see more clearly the original Hebrew and Greek than in any other version. It maintains, for instance, the historical present tense of the original. In relating an historical event, the biblical writers often use, not the past tense, but the present. One effect of this is to make the event more vivid to the reader. The AV therefore has *seeth*, *saith* or *cometh* etc, which reflects the original, rather than *saw*, *said* or *came*. Modern versions, including the NKJV, however, change the present tense to the past.

Accuracy. Many critics suppose that *thee* and *thou* in the AV are simply

out of date. But the truth is that they were already falling out of use in the standard conversational English of the day. Strict accuracy to the original inspired text demands the use of *thee* and *thou* in order to distinguish the singular from the plural. There are many passages where this distinction between the plural *you* and the singular *thou* is vital for understanding Scripture correctly. Sometimes a change from singular to plural or vice versa shows whether a reference is to a distinct person or a set of people.

This distinction is utterly lost in modern versions which use *you* in both cases. An example of this is in Luke 22:31-32: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren". Here we can see that although Simon Peter is being spoken to, Satan has desired to have all of the disciples in order to sift them, not just Peter. This understanding would be lost if *you* is always used.

Important points may rest on such an understanding. In the account of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham speaks from heaven to the Rich Man in hell. He says, "Now Lazarus is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed" (Luke 16:25-6). The Rich man is not alone in his position; no one in hell can pass to heaven (see also Mark 14:37-38, Luke 5:4, John 1:50-51). We must take the greatest care with the Word of God in order to preserve as much of its meaning as possible.

Robert Morrison

3. Reaching a Milestone

In September 1807 Morrison sailed into Guangzhou, then known as Canton; he was the first Protestant missionary to China. His first priority was to translate the Bible into Chinese. It was a huge challenge, especially because anyone who helped a foreigner to learn the language could be sentenced to death.

Morrison had spent a year in Guangzhou learning Chinese when another difficulty arose. Britain was at war with France, and some Royal Navy ships appeared in Chinese waters near Guangzhou. The Chinese authorities there were angry and threatened to take revenge on the British people living in the city. There was widespread panic, and British families took refuge on board ships in the harbour. These ships brought them to Macau, which was then a colony of Portugal. Morrison was among those who fled, along with his precious books and papers. The problem about the British ships was soon resolved, but the incident left the Chinese more suspicious than ever of the foreigners who had come among them.

After Morrison landed in Macau, he found it very difficult to find anyone who would rent him a place where he could live. He had to pay a high price for an attic which was in poor repair. But not long after he moved into the property, the roof fell in. Even then, after the roof had been patched up, he would have stayed on, but his landlord increased his rent by a third. This was too much for him and again he had to search for somewhere to stay.

Morrison was determined to learn the language, whatever difficulties he faced. As his knowledge increased, he was using it to build up his collection of Chinese words and their meanings in English, which was to be published as a dictionary. If you could have looked in on him in his attic in Macau, you might have seen him pouring out his prayers to God in broken Chinese. It was just one of many ways in which he was obtaining some practice in this difficult language.

Because he was afraid that local officials would send him away from Macau, he avoided going outside. This may have been a factor in the ill-health he suffered at this time, but to Morrison it was more important to succeed in learning the language than to feel well, so determined was he to put the Word of God into Chinese. Yet the people in Macau became more and more suspicious of this strange man who was so different from the other Englishmen and Americans they knew; they were in the Far East to make money, but he was not. What, they must have been asking, had brought him there? His situation was becoming rather dangerous.

But in 1809 there were two major changes in Morrison's life. First, in spite of how much he kept to his lodgings, he met a young Englishwoman who became his wife. Second, the East India Company, which had important trading links with China as well as with India, employed Morrison as a translator at what was a huge salary for the time. Not only did the money make life easier for them in many ways – for a start, he could afford much better accommodation – but it made his situation in China much more secure. Now that he was working for a trading company, the Chinese authorities were much less likely to expel him from the country. Besides, the translation work he did for the company gave him extra practice in the Chinese language, and he had many more opportunities to speak with Chinese people.

The fact that he was appointed by the Company to this position shows that he must have made great progress in learning the language. Yet his main purpose in life had not changed; he was still following his original plan of translating the Bible.

The Morrisons often had to sail between Guangzhou and Macau, but these were dangerous waters because of pirates. Mrs Morrison worried about the dangers and seems to have become very nervous. It was still very lonely for

them in Guangzhou; the English and American merchants there were kind to them but they had very little sympathy with the work that had brought Morrison to the Far East.

For many missionaries, sadness was to feature in their lives again and again. The Morrises were no exception. Their first child was a boy, but he died at birth, and Morrison had himself to see to burying the little body on the side of a mountain. His wife too was dangerously ill. Indeed, in 1818, she had to return to Britain because her health was so poor.

The men who worked with him in the Company's office thought he was a fool. This perhaps was not surprising since they had no sympathy with what he hoped to achieve and they did not believe the gospel he hoped to bring to the Chinese people. It was no doubt very encouraging to receive letters from Britain, but they came only occasionally – ships took several months on their voyage to China and there was probably a long time between them.

In spite of the difficulties, Morrison worked on at his dictionary and also at a Chinese grammar. This work was not only useful to himself when he came to translate the Bible but also to others who came afterwards, including those who were able to improve on his translation. At last the grammar was finished, in 1812, and it was sent to India to be printed. He heard nothing about it for three years. What questions must have risen in his mind! Was the printing being done properly? Was it going ahead at all? Or had the book been lost at sea? Then one day a ship sailed in, and in its hold were copies of Morrison's Chinese grammar book, nicely printed. How relieved he must have been! Anyone could see that the whole work was an impressive achievement.

Already he had begun to make use of the knowledge he had gained of the Chinese language. He wrote a tract and a catechism and had them printed, presumably locally. Back in his London days, when he was learning the basics of Chinese, Morrison had made a translation of the Acts of the Apostles and of Paul's Epistles. These translations would have been done with a view to getting practice in the language; he would never have thought of having them published. Now, with a much-improved knowledge of Chinese, he was ready to attempt a new translation. He began with Acts and had 1000 copies of it printed; it was the first part of Scripture to be put into print in Chinese. He had reached a milestone.

The next book of Scripture to be printed was Morrison's translation of Luke's Gospel. A copy of this fell into the hands of the Roman Catholic Bishop in Macau; he was not at all pleased. He proclaimed it a heretical book and ordered it to be burned. He must have been afraid that it would show up the errors of his religion, which finds it difficult to survive in the light of pure gospel truth. The translation even of small parts of the Bible was likely

to prove damaging to Satan's kingdom in China. No doubt Satan's defensive reaction was reflected in the Bishop's order.

But there was more. After local officials had read what Morrison had published, an edict came out from the Chinese authorities. It was directed against him and any other Europeans who would seek to undermine Chinese religion. The edict declared that any person organising the printing and publishing of Christian books in Chinese would be condemned to death; anyone else involved would suffer some lesser, but still serious, punishment.

Morrison, no doubt looking to God for help, told the Society in London which supported him that he would continue quietly as before. Probably the fact that he was working for the East India Company gave him some protection, and his largest publications so far, his Chinese grammar and dictionary could hardly be considered Christian books. The important point to note is that, no matter how powerfully Satan and his followers may react against a work of God, they cannot succeed if it is God's purpose to have it continue. A Christian Church was yet to be planted in China.

For Younger Readers

God's Care

Mr Ball was a minister long ago. One day a friend told him that he had fallen from his horse.

He never had such a wonderful deliverance before, he told Mr Ball. He had fallen to the ground, but he did not hurt himself at all.

Mr Ball did not agree. "Yes, you have, a hundred times," he said. His friend had a hundred deliverances which were more wonderful.

What did he mean? Mr Ball explained himself. His friend rode that way on his horse many times before, and nothing happened. God took him safely along the way, without him falling.

That was even more wonderful than falling and not hurting himself. I am sure that, when the man picked himself up after falling from his horse, he thanked God for taking care of him. I hope he thanked God every time he came home safely after riding his horse.

Do you thank God when you come home safely after a trip in a car – or in a bus or a train or a plane, or even on a horse? You should always thank God for taking care of you. And you should always ask Him to take care of you wherever you go.

“The Power of God unto Salvation”

3. Paul's Second Missionary Journey (1)

In the first two sections of this Youth Conference paper we considered Paul's first missionary journey. We now pass on to the second of these journeys. This month's article is based on Acts 15:36-16:15.

Paul's second missionary journey also began from Antioch, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, when he proposed to Barnabas that they should revisit the cities where they had previously preached. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them; he was closely related to Barnabas and had started off with them on their first missionary journey. But Paul did not think it was right to take Mark because he had abandoned them on the first journey; Mark did not persevere in the work he had undertaken.



We may be surprised that two godly men, such as Paul and Barnabas, deeply involved in the work of the gospel, should have disagreed so strongly that they had to work separately from then on. But we must not expect perfection in this world. We do not know the details of what happened, but one suspects that Paul made the wiser decision. Yet one is glad to note Paul's request to Timothy, in what was the last Epistle he ever wrote: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry"

(2 Timothy 4:11). In any case, we should realise that God is ruling over all the affairs of His Church and that He is ruling wisely, even when major difficulties arise. The outcome was that Barnabas took Mark and they sailed together to Cyprus where, presumably, they gave themselves to the work of faithfully spreading the gospel.

Paul chose Silas, who is described as one of the “chief men among the brethren”, as his new companion in the work of the gospel. They made their way through Syria and then Cilicia, which was a large province of the Roman Empire, in south-east Turkey; its capital was Tarsus, where Paul had been brought up. We do not know anything about their travels through these districts, only that they focused on confirming the churches – strengthening, or establishing, them in the faith.

When they returned to Derbe and Lystra they met Timothy, who is described as a disciple; he was probably converted under Paul’s ministry on his previous visit. Timothy’s mother was Eunice, a believing Jewess, but his father was a Gentile, possibly a heathen. Timothy joined Paul and Silas in their missionary work. Through God’s blessing on their work, the churches were “established in the faith and increased in number daily”.

After spending some time in central Turkey, including the area of Galatia – where the churches were later to receive an Epistle from Paul – they planned to preach the gospel in Asia, a province occupying most of western Turkey (not the continent, which is what we would naturally think of when we hear of *Asia*). But the Holy Ghost directed them not to preach there at that time; it was God’s purpose that the gospel should then spread to Europe. The message of salvation was intended for the whole world.

Paul and his friends reached Troas, a port on the west coast of Turkey. That night, in a vision, he saw a man from Macedonia, a Roman province which occupied a large part of Greece. Thessalonica and Philippi were important cities in this province. The man begged Paul: “Come over into Macedonia and help us”. Paul and the others understood that God was using the vision to direct them to make their way to Macedonia and preach the gospel there.

So they sailed to the seaport of Neapolis, from where they went on to nearby Philippi – described in Acts as “the chief city of that part of Macedonia”. It is also referred to as “a colony”; most people in the city were Romans, and to live in such a city was much like living in Rome itself, but on a smaller scale. Like Paul himself, the people enjoyed the rights of Roman citizens, such as freedom from being scourged. It is worth noticing that, at this point, the word *we* is used to describe the missionary party; evidently Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, had now joined Paul and Silas.

In Philippi there was no synagogue, probably because too few Jews lived

there. So, in this city, Paul was not able to follow his usual practice of beginning his ministry in the synagogue of each new place he came to. Yet even here, after leaving the city on the Jewish Sabbath and walking on beside a river, Paul and his companions found a group of Jewish women gathered for prayer. Among the women was Lydia; she belonged to Thyatira, a city back in Asia, the district where Paul and Silas had been forbidden to preach. Thyatira was famous for its purple dye, obtained from shellfish, but probably what Lydia was selling was cloth or clothes dyed in one of the purple shades for which her city was famous. The statement that she “worshipped God” implies that she had some knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures through attending Jewish services, probably in her home city.

Now the Lord opened her heart and, as a result, she attended to what Paul was saying. Here we are pointed to the work of the Holy Spirit in her heart; she was born again. So she was now spiritually alive; that was why she was able to receive the truths that Paul was preaching. The great truth he declared was salvation through Jesus Christ; and, through the work of the Spirit, Lydia was able to trust in the Saviour; God called her effectually in His mercy. Lydia and her household were then baptised and she persuaded the missionaries to stay in her house.

The New Birth

6. Who Are Born Again? Some More Answers

J C Ryle

This is the last part of a chapter on regeneration, from Ryle's *Knots Untied*. It has been edited. Ryle explained regeneration as “that change of heart and nature which someone goes through when he becomes a true Christian”. In last month's article, Ryle began to address the question: Who are born again? Here he gives us three more answers from the First Epistle of John.

(4.) John says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). A regenerate man has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves everyone with a great general love, but he has a special love for those who are of one mind with himself. Like his Lord and Saviour, he loves the worst of sinners and could weep over them; but he has a special love for believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company; he is never so happy as when he is among the saints and the excellent of the earth. Others may value learning or cleverness or agreeableness or riches or importance. The regenerate man values grace.

Those who have most grace, and are most like Christ, are those he loves most. He feels that they are members of the same family with himself – his brothers, his sisters, children of the same Father. He feels that they are fellow soldiers, fighting under the same captain, warring against the same enemy. He feels that they are his fellow-travellers, journeying along the same road, tried by the same difficulties, and soon about to rest with him in the same eternal home. He understands them, and they understand him. He and they may be very different in many ways. What does it matter? They are Jesus Christ's people; they are His Father's sons and daughters. Then he cannot help loving them.

(5.) John says, "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4). A regenerate man does not make the world's opinion his rule of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the stream of the world's ways, ideas and customs. "What will men say?" is no longer a turning point with him. He overcomes the love of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which most around him call happiness. He cannot enjoy their enjoyments; they weary him; they appear to him vain, unprofitable, and unworthy of a being who will exist for ever. He overcomes the fear of the world.

He is content to do many things which all around him think unnecessary, to say the least. They blame him, but it does not move him. They mock him, but he does not give way; he loves the praise of God more than the praise of man. He fears offending Him more than giving offence to man. He has counted the cost. He has taken his stand. It is a small thing with him now whether he is blamed or praised. His eye is upon Him who is invisible. He is resolved to follow Christ wherever He goes. In following Him, it may be necessary to come out from the world and be separate.

The regenerate man will not shrink from doing so. Tell him that he is unlike other people, that his views are not the views of society generally, and that he is making himself look odd. You will not shake him. He is no longer the servant of fashion and custom. To please the world is not at all the most important matter with him. His first aim is to please God.

(6.) John says, "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself" (1 John 5:18). A regenerate man is very careful of his own soul. He tries not only to keep clear of sin, but also to keep clear of everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps; he feels that evil company corrupts the heart, and that evil is far more catching than good – just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the friendships he forms: it is not enough for him that people are kind and good-natured. All this is very well, but will they do good to his soul?

He is careful about the use of his time: his chief desire about it is to spend

it profitably. He is careful about the books he reads: he fears getting his mind poisoned by harmful writings. He is careful over his daily habits and behaviour: he tries to remember that his own heart is deceitful, that the world is full of wickedness, that the devil is always labouring to do him harm; and therefore he wants to be always on his guard. He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy's country, to wear his armour continually, and to be prepared for temptation. He finds by experience that his soul is always among enemies, and he is careful to be watchful, humble and prayerful.

These are the *six great marks of regeneration*, which God has given for our learning. Let everyone who has gone thus far with me read them over with attention and lay them to heart. I know there is a vast difference in the depth and distinctness of these marks among those who are regenerate. In some people they are faint, dim, feeble – hardly to be discerned; you almost need a microscope to make them out. In others they are bold, sharp, clear, plain and unmistakable, so that he who runs may read them. Some of these marks are more visible in some people, and others are more visible in others. It seldom happens that all are equally clear in any one soul.

All this I am quite ready to allow. But still, after every allowance, here we find boldly painted these six marks of being born of God. Here are certain positive things that John has laid down as parts of the regenerate man's character, as plainly and distinctly as the features of someone's face. Here is an inspired Apostle writing one of the last Epistles to the Church of Christ, telling us that a man born of God (1) does not commit sin, (2) believes that Jesus is the Christ, (3) does righteousness, (4) loves the brethren, (5) overcomes the world, (6) keeps himself. More than once in the same Epistle, when these marks are mentioned, the Apostle tells us that he who has not this or that mark is "not of God". I ask the reader to note all this.

Now what shall we say to these things? For myself, I say boldly that I can come to just one conclusion: only those are regenerate who have these six marks, and all men and women who do not have these marks are not regenerate; they are not born again. And I firmly believe that this is the conclusion which the Apostle wished us to come to.

I ask all who read this to consider it seriously. I believe that I have said nothing but what is God's truth. We live in a day when people are in gross darkness on the subject of regeneration. Many are darkening God's counsel by confounding Baptism and regeneration. Let us beware of this. Let us keep the two subjects separate in our minds. Let us get clear views about regeneration first of all, and then we are not likely to fall into mistakes about Baptism. And when we have got clear views, let us hold them fast, and never let them go.

Looking Around Us

Should We Follow Our Own Heart?

Steve Jobs was head of the computer company Apple almost until his recent death. Apple is probably best known now for two very successful products: the iPhone, of which about 210 000 are sold every day, and the iPad, which became available in 2010 and attracted 15 million buyers in its first year.

In its extensive coverage of Jobs' life and achievements, *Time* magazine quotes from a speech he gave at an American university in 2005: "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have courage to follow your own heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become."

Obviously, everyone's time in this world is limited. So we must not waste it. That means, though the thought may not have entered Jobs' mind, we must seek to live our lives to the glory of God.

What Jobs seemed to want to stress is that we should think for ourselves, that we should not be influenced by other people's ideas. Certainly, in introducing new products at Apple, he did not pay much attention to traditional ways of doing things or to what other people thought. And he was very successful in doing things his own way. Yet it probably needs a most unusual individual to operate successfully like this. Most of us need to show a great deal of respect for the experience of others. And if we do not pay attention to how other people have made a success of what they were doing, and to where they have gone wrong, we are not likely to do anything right.

The most important point is that we need to listen to God, as He speaks to us in the Bible. If we have good grounds for doing so, it is wise to challenge other people's dogmas (their fixed ideas) – about designing computers, for instance. But it is absolutely foolish to challenge the teachings of the Bible; to do so is likely to lead to disaster in this life and will most certainly bring about a catastrophic eternity. If we live with God's thinking, if we submit to it with our whole heart, all will be well.

Is our "inner voice" a safe guide? If we listen to the Bible – if we even pay attention to our own experience – we will realise that it is influenced by our sinful nature. If we rely on our own ideas, we are bound to go wrong. Our knowledge is limited but, more importantly, our thinking is perverted by sin. When God tells us to obey His commandments, we do not want to do so unless we have a new heart, a heart which has been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Only then do we want to love God and serve Him.

What is more, we need to find the way to heaven. And if we follow our own heart and our own sense of what is right, we will never find the way; we are bound to continue on the broad road which leads to a lost eternity. By nature we do not want to follow Christ; we do not want to depend on Him as the One who died for sinners. We want to live life in our own way; at best, we want to depend on our own self-righteousness.

God has said, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26). So, obviously, our duty is to stop trusting in our own hearts and instead to trust in Jesus Christ as the Saviour whom He has sent. To trust in Jesus Christ is to set off on the right way towards heaven. And, in the rest of the verse, God assures us: "Whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered"; if we go through the rest of our lives in this world, not trusting in our own hearts, but depending on Christ, we will be delivered from every danger. At last we will be delivered from death – we will be brought through it safely. We will even be delivered from eternal death. All will be well.

What we need more than anything else in this life is to submit to what God has revealed in the Bible about the way of salvation that He has appointed. There is no other way.

Australia and New Zealand Youth Conference

The Youth Conference for 2012 will be held, God willing, from 1.30 pm on Tuesday, January 10, till 3 pm on Thursday, January 12, at the Winmalee Christian Conference Centre in the Blue Mountains. The lower age limit is 16. The cost is A\$100. Payment can be made on arrival at the conference, but please e-mail Mr J van Praag (jnv@aaapt.net.au) *as soon as possible* to tell him that you intend to attend. For further enquiries please contact Mr van Praag. The papers and speakers for this conference are as follows:

The Life and Service of the Apostle Paul *Rev J D Smith*

The Establishment of the Free Presbyterian Church in Australia

Mr C MacKenzie

Islam

Mr C Van Kralingen

The Watchtower Society (wrongly called Jehovah's Witnesses)

Rev G B Macdonald

Three Kings (David to Rehoboam) – Some Lessons for Today

Mr H Optland

Price 80p