

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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**Cover Picture:** *The River Thames in London, where C H Spurgeon was a minister.* See page 111.

## The Young People's Magazine

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# The Young People's Magazine

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Number 6

## Ten Important Words from the Bible

All of these words are important. I have not included any of the names of God, and you may feel that I should have included some words I have missed out. Yet these words are all important.

**1. Scripture.** In the Bible, God is giving us a revelation of Himself and of everything He wants us to know about spiritual things. Otherwise we would be ignorant about true religion; we would not know the danger we are in as sinners and we would not know how we can be delivered from this terrible situation. The whole of Scripture is true; there is no error in it; it is all perfectly reliable. The Holy Spirit so led the minds of its human writers that they made no mistakes whatever. So we can trust everything that the Bible says, from beginning to end.

**2. Sin.** Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created perfect. They loved God with all their hearts. But that situation did not last. Satan came to tempt them. First Eve fell into sin and then Adam; they were not perfect any longer; indeed their whole beings were sinful. They could not now love God; so there was sin in everything they did. That is true of all mankind, and that includes us. However hard we may try to keep God's commandments, we cannot keep them properly – especially because we do not seek God's glory perfectly; we do not love Him with our whole heart. People may not want to hear about sin, but we must not ignore what is a very serious fact.

**3. Death.** Adam and Eve knew that they must not eat of a particular tree. God told Adam: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). But this is what Satan wanted: to get them to eat of the tree and so sin against God. When Adam and Eve did so, they had to die – though hundreds of years passed before that actually happened. And because we have inherited Adam's sin, we too must die – all of us. We do not know when it will happen, but one thing is sure: we *will* die. Because we do not know the time; we ought to be prepared for it now. And we must make the most of our opportunities in life. These opportunities will soon come to an end; then we will be swept away into eternity. Whatever our spiritual state at that time, so will our spiritual state be for ever – in heaven or in hell.

**4. Hell.** This is the place of eternal punishment. God prepared it for the devil and his angels, when they fell from their condition of perfection in heaven into a state of sin and rebellion against God. And hell is where unbelieving human beings go, people who have not been delivered from the guilt of their sins. One thing we must remember about those in hell is that they never stop sinning, which is one important reason why their suffering never ends. We should never think lightly about hell; we should never speak about it thoughtlessly. People speak about experiencing hell in this world, but that is impossible. Hell is far more serious than what anyone in this life can possibly experience.

**5. Salvation.** Even when Adam and Eve rejected His authority, God did not cast off the human race. He revealed to them a way of salvation, so that they could escape God's anger in the punishment of their sin. The revelation in Old Testament times was clear enough for people to believe and be saved; it was all pointing forward to Jesus Christ. But in due time, He came into the world to suffer the punishment due to sinners. Because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), He had to die; He had to offer Himself up as a sacrifice to satisfy God's justice.

That sacrifice was accepted for sinners. We know that because Christ rose from the grave; the One who was dead became alive again. Then He went up to heaven, where He reigns in the place of power. He is administering the blessings of salvation to needy sinners all over the world.

**6. Faith.** How do sinners receive salvation for themselves? By faith in Jesus Christ. They must receive the truths about Him – which were summed up in the last paragraph, on the basis of what the Bible teaches. People must not only believe these truths; they must also trust in Christ as He is made known to them. That believing, or trust, is what is meant by *faith*. Thus Paul and Silas told the jailer in Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). He was to believe what they told him about the Lord Jesus. As a sinner, he was to trust in this perfect Saviour, who was able to deliver him from the guilt of all his sins. And, by the Holy Spirit, Jesus could make him a new creature who would seek to live the rest of his life to the glory of God. We too are called to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might be saved. His salvation is suited to the needs of every kind of sinner. So no one has any right to stay away from Him.

**7. Repentance.** Sin is offensive to God. So we must turn away from it. There are many such calls in the Bible. For instance, when Jesus began to preach, He told those listening to Him to *repent* and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). Repentance involves a whole new attitude to sin, which is the result of the Holy Spirit working in one's soul. Those who have repented do not

want to sin; they want to do what is right – to do what God is telling them to do. They want to love Him with all their heart. So they not only turn from the sins which other people might see; they want to think holy thoughts and they want to have holy motives. They are very conscious that they lack the power to turn from sin and to please God. So they pray to Him to make them holy and to give them more and more of the grace of repentance.

**8. Heaven.** When believers die, they go to be with Christ in heaven. It is a place of perfect happiness; there will be no sadness there, and no trouble. One of the most important things about heaven is that there will be no sin there, nothing that can separate anyone from God's favour. Those who are brought there will worship and serve God perfectly for ever. Only those with a new heart can be happy there. If it was possible for unconverted people to enter heaven, they would want out at once.

**9. Prayer.** True prayer is part of the worship that is due to the great God who made us. But all of us ought to pray. We are to tell God our needs, and He is able to supply them all. He invites us: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee" (Psalm 50:15). Yet we ought to remember that we are to seek "*first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness". Whatever we ask for in prayer, it must be for Jesus' sake. It is only because of what He has done that God hears prayer.

**10. Now.** This may be an unexpected word in our list. But it is highly important. Time is short and, if we are to find salvation, we must seek it now. God says, "*Now* is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

A young man went to a service and found the building already full. He climbed up a drainpipe and sat on a second-storey windowsill. As he settled himself there, he heard the preacher reading these words from Luke 14:22: "Yet there is room". The words impressed the young man in these unusual circumstances – the words were telling him, and everyone else present, that there is plenty of room for sinners at the feet of Jesus. He went home that night very troubled about his sin. He sought salvation *at once* and eventually found rest through these words: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

We too should be earnest about our souls. We ought to take all God's words seriously, including the little word *now*. So when Christ calls us to come to Him – to trust in Him as a perfect Saviour – we ought to do so at once. It is not next year, not next month, not next week, not even tomorrow; it is "*now*". That is what God says, and all His words are important. We cannot be sure we will still be alive at any future moment. At this moment, *now*, we are told: "Yet there is a room". Another time may be too late.

# Regeneration and Conversion

## 1. The Romans Road

*Rev K M Watkins*

This is the first part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. The subtitle was: "Make the tree good and its fruit will be good".

There was a young man some 30 years ago, in Birmingham, England, who wanted everyone to be saved. He was always heavily involved with evangelistic effort: giving out tracts; going from door to door; witnessing to people he worked with; inviting people to church and taking them to gospel "campaigns". He would speak to people on the train, on the bus, anywhere, about their need to be saved. He would give lifts to hitchhikers just to tell them about salvation through faith in Jesus.

His aim was to lead people as soon as possible through what is called the *Romans Road*. Beginning at Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", he would want them to admit that, like everyone else, they were not perfect. That was *sin*, he would explain. Then he would take them along the road to Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". He would tell them that because of their sins they would die and go to hell, but that God had provided eternal life through Jesus.

From there he would turn to Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us", explaining that the Lord Jesus has obtained forgiveness for sinners by dying on the cross for their sins. Then he would go on to Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved". At this point he would tell them that they had free will, which they must use to make a decision to believe in Jesus.

The young man would sum up the situation like this. God had done everything He could do; He could not do more; He had sent His Son to be punished for their sins by dying in their place. Now God was waiting for their decision. It was up to them whether they wanted to be saved or not. "You don't want to go to hell, do you?" he would ask. Of course not. "You do want to be saved, don't you?" Of course!

He would then persuade them to say what is called the sinner's prayer, repeating after him words like these: "Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner and that I deserve to go to hell. But now I believe that Thou hast died for my sins. I ask Thee to come into my heart to be my Saviour. Now I believe that my sins are forgiven."

When they had said this prayer, usually of course they felt nothing. They felt nothing because nothing had happened. But the young man did not understand that; neither did they. He would quickly assure them that they were born again, because of what they had done. Jesus keeps His promises, he would tell them, showing them Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him”. He would explain that by their decision they had opened the door to Jesus, so He most certainly had come in. They must never doubt their salvation. By believing that Jesus died for them they had been born again.

The young man had much zeal, but it was zeal without knowledge. In the Lord’s mercy, he began to feel a need to understand the process of salvation clearly. He asked his Pentecostal pastor and elders: “What actually is the new birth?” According to his own way of thinking at the time, he expanded, “I know that when people say the sinner’s prayer and ask Jesus into their heart, they are then born again. But what exactly is the new birth?” His pastor and elders could not explain. They were not even interested. So he had to find the answer elsewhere. That set him on a journey in search of truth that brought him to the Reformed faith, where he found the Bible’s doctrine of regeneration and conversion.

*Regeneration and conversion.* These words were not used by the young man. He had little understanding of doctrine. He used terms like born again, being saved, and believing in Jesus, without really understanding what he was talking about.

What about yourself? What did you think when you saw the title of this article? Did you say, “O, that’s theology. I’m never going to be a minister, so I don’t need to know about that. I’ve got enough to learn already with my subjects at school, at college, at university, at work. I know I need to be saved, but surely I don’t have to know what regeneration is, or how it differs from conversion.” But it is vital to understand these subjects. The Lord Jesus was speaking of every Christian when He said: “He shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17). These subjects are not just for theologians. In the Scripture, God has written for us all the great things of His gospel. That includes regeneration and conversion.

So what do these words mean? Our subtitle helps. “Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good.” “Make the tree good” – that is *regeneration*. “And its fruit will be good” – that is *conversion*. Regeneration is the Lord changing an evil tree into a good tree. *Conversion* is the good fruit that comes from that now-regenerated tree. Making the tree good is when a sinner is *regenerated* by the operation of the Holy Spirit. *Conversion* is when that sinner brings forth the good fruits of faith and repentance, the two saving graces.

The picture comes from a passage in Matthew 12, where the Lord Jesus explains (in verse 33) that the quality of a tree is known by the quality of its fruit. If it is a good tree, it will bring forth good fruit. If it is a corrupt, evil and rotten tree, then it will bring forth corrupt, evil and rotten fruit. "The tree is known by his fruit." He applies it to people's souls (in verse 35): "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things". If your soul has been "made good" by regeneration, then it will have the good things of grace in it, and you will bring forth the good things of conversion. But if your soul is still evil, in the rotten corruption of sin, you will only have evil things in it, and you will bring forth only evil things.

Before we learn from the young man's many mistakes, there is something that should stir us and perhaps shame us. He understood that everyone was lost and on the way to hell and that salvation was only in Christ. He knew that no one could believe in Him without hearing about Him. Therefore he was going to tell everyone. Perhaps his zeal rebukes our complacency. Yes, he had zeal without knowledge. But that will not excuse us if we have knowledge without zeal. Almost everyone around us is lost. No one is warning them. If we do not say anything, that is not right.

When the four Israelite lepers found that the Syrian army had fled, leaving food behind them which the besieged city of Samaria needed so desperately; they just helped themselves at first. Then they came to a better mind, saying: "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace . . . now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household" (2 Kings 7:9). If we have found the great treasure of gospel salvation, we will not want to keep quiet about it. If we have been regenerated and converted ourselves, we will want everyone else to be regenerated and converted too.

The young man was acting in accordance with the biblical truth that regeneration and conversion do not happen apart from the message of the gospel. Here is another lesson for us. If we have not been regenerated, and therefore not converted, then we must never miss the preaching of the Word. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). "Ye must be born again"! But you will never be born again apart from the Word of God announcing the good news of Christ.

Those who stop attending the public means of grace do what Cain did. They go out from the presence of the Lord by removing themselves from the preaching which the Lord ordinarily uses to save sinners. Where was Lydia when the Lord opened her heart in regeneration? At the riverside in Philippi, not only where prayer was usually made, but where the gospel was actually preached that Sabbath day.



## Mary Ann's Long Search

Mary Ann was ill, very seriously ill. Although she was not yet 20, she was most unlikely ever to get better, and she was fully aware of that. Although her parents were poor, they were godly; they had taught her from the Bible and prayed for her. Mary Ann read the Bible carefully and prayed for her soul, but she did not believe that she was trusting in Christ. Someone described her as crying for mercy as if she was standing in sight of hell.

At first, when the weather was good, she was still well enough to take a walk into the fields. Other people thought she would recover; she was the only one who was sure that her disease would become worse and worse. That is what happened; she became more and more unwell. And she became more and more concerned about the lost eternity that she believed was ahead of her. She read the Bible and she prayed earnestly for mercy; yet she found no peace for her soul.

A minister used to visit her often. He would carefully point out to her all the truths of the Bible which he felt would help her, truths that might bring her to trust in Christ. But nothing he said did her any good, or so he felt. She knew that she was a guilty sinner with a bad heart, and she mourned because of this. She fully believed the love of God towards sinners, even the willingness of Christ to save her, unworthy as she was. She said she hated sin with all her heart; she longed to be holy; but she felt unable to say that she loved God. She admired "the kindness and love of God our Saviour" towards sinners. Above everything, Mary Ann wanted to be sure that God had accepted her.

Eventually Mary Ann felt that she did have some love to God but, she said, "I am afraid God does not love me and will cast me off for ever, as I deserve". The minister tried to show her God's free invitation to sinners, but she continued to be upset about her spiritual state. Yet if she truly loved God, He obviously loved her, for the order is: "we love Him, because He *first* loved us" (1 John 4:19).

One day the minister was speaking to her about heaven and referred to the words of praise in Revelation 1: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood".

She said, "Others will be in heaven, but I shall be cast out". She expected, from the depths of hell, to see some of her friends in heaven and perhaps to hear them singing. "But no such home for me", she added despairingly.

"How did they come there?" the minister asked. "They were not saved by their goodness. They were no better than you. Jesus Christ saved them by His blood, and He offers to save you."

"He passes me by. He called them and they obeyed the call in due time. But He does not call me."

"He does; He does. He calls you now, 'Come unto Me'."

"If He does, I have no heart to hear Him." She meant that her heart was too hard. Then she added, "My day [for salvation] is past. My day is past. I shall be cast off as I deserve. O I wish I had never been born."

"Your day is not passed", answered the minister, trying to help her out of those depths of despair. And he quoted these words from the Bible: "Now is the day of salvation". But Mary Ann could not answer for crying.

One Sabbath, just before his morning service, a message was brought to the minister asking him to come to see Mary Ann. She was dying. When he reached her room, there seemed to be no great change in her outlook – just that she now thought less about herself and more about her God and Saviour. She would not have used the words, "*my* God and Saviour", but the minister believed that, although she did not see that she was trusting in Christ, she showed in every other way that she was a true believer. There is a real difference between believing in Christ and *knowing* that one has believed in Christ.

The minister prayed with her, commending her to God. Then he shook her hand, expecting never to see her again in this life. She asked him to come again at noon, but he told her frankly that the doctor had said that she could not live for even half an hour. Yet he promised to come back as soon as the service was over.

The church bell was already ringing; he left, went to the church, preached and returned to the house. Mary Ann was still alive. One of her friends met the minister at the door. She had good news. Just after the minister had left, Mary Ann said that she was indeed trusting in Christ; she was sure that He would "take her home to heaven".

"I am full of peace", she said; "I can trust my God. This is enough. I am happy, happy. I die happy." While the minister was away, she looked at the clock again and again, as she waited for the church service to end. Otherwise she spent the time praying to God, praising Him and giving Him thanks.

As the minister entered her room Mary Ann looked at him and said, "I am glad you have come. I have been waiting for you. I wanted to see you once more and tell you how happy I am. I have found out that a poor sinner has nothing to do, only to believe. I am not afraid of death now. I am willing to die. God has forgiven me and I die happy. I am very happy. I wanted to tell you this. I thought I should live long enough to tell you. I thought God would not let me die till I had seen you and told you of my joy, so as not to have you discouraged when you meet with other people who have such dark minds

as mine was. Tell them to seek the Saviour. Light will come sometime, even if it is at the last hour. I prayed God to let me see you once more. He has granted my last prayer, and now – now I am ready.”

She could say no more. The minister went on his knees and prayed briefly at her bedside. Then he and her other friends stood up and, in less than five minutes, Mary Ann’s soul passed away to heaven.

We may wonder why the Lord left Mary Ann so long in such sadness. Yet it is important to realise that there are many such questions which we may not be able to answer. God has His own ways of working. He knew what was best for Mary Ann and He knows what is the best way to deal with every other soul that is seeking Him. It may be that she was, in some way, as the minister suspected, looking to herself more than she was looking to Christ.

But how important never to stop seeking the Lord, even if He seems not to answer our prayers! Jesus Christ has promised that they who seek shall find (Matthew 7:8). And He will always keep His promises. We must never give up in despair.

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## A Great Difference

*C H Spurgeon*

This is a section, slightly edited, from *The Early Years*, a book about Spurgeon, mostly written by himself. Here he recalls the time when the terrible disease of cholera hit London in 1854, shortly after he became a minister there, aged just 19.

**D**uring that epidemic of cholera, though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up so that I might remain in London to visit the sick and the dying. I felt that it was my duty to be on the spot in such a time of disease and death and sorrow.

One Monday morning, I was awakened about 3 o’clock by a sharp ring of the doorbell. I was urged, without delay, to visit a house not very far from London Bridge. I went, and up two pairs of stairs I was shown into a room, the only occupants of which were a nurse and a dying man.

“O sir,” exclaimed the nurse, as I entered, “about half an hour ago, Mr. So-and-so begged me to send for you.”

“What does he want?” I asked.

“He is dying, sir,” she replied.

I said, “Yes, I see that he is; what sort of a man was he?”

The nurse answered, “He came home from Brighton, last night, sir; he had been out all day. I looked for a Bible, sir, but there is not one in the house; I hope you have brought one with you.”

“O,” I said, “a Bible would be of no use to him now. If he could understand me, I could tell him the way of salvation in the very words of Scripture.”

I stood by his side, and spoke to him, but he gave me no answer. I spoke again, but the only consciousness he had was a foreboding of terror, mingled with the stupor of approaching death. Soon, even that was gone, for sense had fled, and I stood there, a few minutes, sighing with the poor woman who had watched over him, and altogether hopeless about his soul. Gazing at his face, I perceived that he was dead, and that his soul had departed.

That man, in his lifetime, had been wont to jeer at me. In strong language, he had often denounced me as a hypocrite. Yet he was no sooner smitten by the darts of death than he sought my presence and counsel, no doubt feeling in his heart that I was a servant of God, though he did not care to own it with his lips. There I stood, unable to help him. Promptly as I had responded to his call, what could I do but look at his corpse and mourn over a lost soul?

He had, when in health, wickedly refused Christ, yet in his death agony he had superstitiously sent for me. Too late, he sighed for the ministry of reconciliation, and sought to enter in at the closed door, but he was not able. There was no space left him then for repentance, for he had wasted the opportunities which God had long granted to him.

I went home, and was soon called away again, that time to see a young woman. She also was close to death, but it was a fair, fair sight. She was singing – though she knew she was dying – and talking to those round about her, telling her brothers and sisters to follow her to heaven, bidding goodbye to her father, and all the while smiling as if it had been her marriage day. She was happy and blessed. I never saw more clearly in my life, than I did that morning, the difference there is between one who fears God and one who does not fear Him.

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## Samuel Rutherford and Prayer

### 4. Prayer and Faith

*Matthew Vogan*

Last month's article began to explain what Rutherford had to say about prayer.

**D**o we truly consider the greatness of the goodness God shows in the food on our tables? Do we say grace out of tradition or from heartfelt thankfulness? May the Lord forgive us for mumbled graces. Perhaps many down the years have said, “For what we are about to receive, O Lord, make us truly thankful,” when really there were scarcely more ungrateful creatures on the face of the earth. Those who do not trust in Christ should pause and consider

that these gifts are a token of longsuffering towards them in spite of their continued rebellion. But for those united to Christ by faith, outward mercies are more than gifts from God as Creator.

“We have them”, says Rutherford, “from God in Christ your Redeemer. If your person be in Christ, then your basket and your dough and your table are more to you than to reprobate men. Blessed bread is more than bread, it is the bread of heaven. If bread, health, seeing eyes, children, peace came to you through Christ, David’s Son, then they smell of Christ’s ointments and perfumes. What Christ gives is more than the single creature [created thing]. All things are yours. Why? Because you are Christ’s [1 Corinthians 3:21]. The gift smells of the giver. The musk [perfume] of heaven is on all that comes through the sweet-smelling fingers of Christ.”

This emphasis and focus reminds us of the reason that Rutherford’s writing is so delightful to believers who are spiritually exercised. It is because he is always tracing everything up to the Lord Jesus Christ: Christ is the centre, and love to Christ is everything. Yet this can challenge us in an uncomfortable way. The question of whether we have the same total love may cut into our consciences. If our love is sincere it should be the prevailing influence in our lives, but far too often our thoughts and actions are not truly absorbed in Christ and taken up with Him.

***Prayer and faith.*** Prayer must be in faith. As Rutherford puts it: “The national language of the country of faith and its proper grammar is prayer. We must not separate prayer and believing. Praying without faith is [nothing more than a] breathing of wind, and sounds without life. . . . But praying with faith is like the breathings of a living man, that is hot and nourishes life, and keeps the body in a vital heat of life as long as it continues in the body. O, how many heathenish, pagan sounds in prayer do we utter to our Lord? Prayer without faith is but pagan service and the voice of dogs howling for hunger. And faith that cannot vent itself in prayer is presumption possessed with a dumb devil.”

If we only knew what believing prayer could accomplish, we would not restrain prayer before God (Job 15:4). “If we could pray and believe, the great Antichrist and the mountains of the earth (the Emperors, the Kings and the powers of the world that take part with him) should be humbled into the bottom of the sea.”

***Prayer and grace.*** Grace is essential to prayer; that is clear. As we have seen, adoption is the foundation of true prayer: only those who have received the Spirit of adoption can truly pray. “Praying must have some spiritual quality in it since it is a work of the Spirit. Speaking of words is not prayer. The devils in Legion beseeched Christ [but] it was not prayer [Luke 8:30-31].

Praying is a grace and must be fathered and bottomed [grounded] on grace. There is no plea nor motive why God should hear us, but mercy."

The Holy Spirit, through grace alone, can make a person able to pray. To say otherwise would be to say that men can pray acceptably by their own strength, will and nature. As Rutherford observes, it is like saying that the child is born before the mother, or that the apple grows before the tree.

Some might say, "I cannot pray if I am unregenerate and I must not pray until the Spirit breathes upon me with heavenly impressions, and then I can pray in the Spirit to God". But all are commanded to pray. Unregenerate men are commanded to pray, as was Simon Magus in Acts 8:22; his heart was not right, yet he had to "pray God" for forgiveness.

"The First Commandment", which is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3), "charges all to know the Lord practically in all the ways of law and gospel by which he shall reveal Himself." Rutherford refers here to the same understanding of the First Commandment as we have in *The Larger Catechism* (Questions 104-105). The Commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God "and to worship and glorify Him accordingly" by "calling upon Him, giving all praise and thanks" (see Psalm 29:2). Therefore this command requires all to pray to Him every bit as much as to acknowledge Him to be the only true and living God.

Sometimes the children of God can also fall into this error of thinking that they can never pray unless moved by the Holy Spirit. This is wrong, Rutherford says, as prayer is our duty because God has commanded it, not because we may have the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit in order to help us to pray.

We must pray for the Spirit's help, but we must take care to make the Word of God our only rule and not our feelings. How shall the feelings of the Spirit be known except by the Word? If everything depended on our feelings, it would make the Word useless. The command cries to the conscience; the voice of the Lord sounds in the Word: "Pray without ceasing"; "Call upon Me in the day of trouble". We cannot excuse ourselves from praying by assuming that the Spirit's influences are absent. We have a responsibility to pray, just as the farmer cannot hold back from ploughing and sowing because he does not find a time as desirable as he wants. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4). We are "no less under a precept, and a command to act, believe, pray, than the husbandman [farmer] is under a command to plough in summer, and to sow, lest he be poor". We must pray, and believe that the Holy Spirit will provide needed help and grace.

But we should not run to the other extreme, which would treat prayer

merely as a formal duty. This is the Romanist error, that would regard prayer as a mere work or charm. We should certainly consider the state of our hearts before we pray. We should prepare them for it; otherwise it will be the sacrifice of fools. It is impossible to pray acceptably either in anger, deceitfulness, worldly-mindedness or pride. We must pray in order to pray rather than rush headlong upon such duties. "Prayer is like God's file to stir a rusty heart", says Rutherford. Prayer works upon getting the seized-up and rusty graces of the heart moving again. There are, of course, exceptions such as arrow prayers, or emergency cries, which we must simply cry out in a moment of urgency. We do not need to prepare ourselves for these but ordinarily there should be preparation before prayer.

The Lord gives influences according to His will of pleasure (His secret will); but we must stir and pray, and act according to His will of command (revealed will). This is illustrated throughout Psalm 119, where both prayer and the need of the influences of grace are interwoven. In verse 25 we read of a situation in which the influences are withdrawn: "My soul cleaveth unto the dust". There immediately follows a petition: "Quicken me according to Thy word". This shows how we should respond to God withdrawing the sovereign influences in His secret will. We take up the duty of praying, according to His revealed will, and pray for those very influences to be restored. Rutherford himself had these struggles at times, when he did not feel the presence of Christ. In a letter to James Guthrie, he asks him to pray for him since he is "at low ebb, as to any sensible [conscious] communion with Christ; yea, as low as any soul can be, and do scarce know where I am".

God's sovereignty in connection with prayer is mysterious, especially a prayer for spiritual life. Such a prayer in faith will ultimately be effectual in the experience of the believer. In the meantime, however, the Lord uses prayer to keep the soul under "sufficient graces, fresh showerings, and keeps the burnt man under patient enduring of the fire in condition of a refreshing, cooling and expelling of the heat". "Suffering pain in faith and joy is more excellent than the removing of pain", says Rutherford.

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## The Prince and the Sabbath

Prince George, who later became the British King, George IV, was an Ungodly man. In 1809 he appointed a great army parade to be held on a Sabbath. Bishop Porteus, of London, was shocked. He was an old man, seriously ill, and had problems with his voice; he now spoke so quietly that other people could scarcely hear him; indeed he had just five days to live.

Yet so disturbed was he by the Prince's decision that he went to see him and earnestly warned the future King about the sin of breaking God's holy day. The Bishop also asked the Prince to consider the serious effects that his bad example might have on the millions of British people. It would probably influence many to think that Sabbath-breaking did not matter. It might even have an influence, the Bishop said, on where these people would spend eternity. One wonders if any English bishop today would think or speak like Bishop Porteus.

On a Sabbath, Prince George sent a message to a workman telling him to come to the Palace that day, as the Prince expected to go away early the next day. The workman knew the importance of keeping the Sabbath and so refused to come. He realised perfectly well that, as a result, he might no longer be offered work at the Palace, and such work was possibly better paid than other work. But this workman considered Sabbath-keeping to be far more important than the loss of some money, although he probably did not have much to spare.

Very early on the Monday morning, the workman came to the Palace and was brought to the Prince. "I sent for you yesterday," the Prince told him; "why did you not come?"

"The King wanted me", replied the workman.

"The King!" exclaimed the Prince. Then he explained his surprise: he thought his father never sent for workmen on Sabbaths. The Prince's answer reflects the fact that King George III was a very different kind of man from his son Prince George. The King may well have been a converted man. Clearly he respected the Sabbath.

The workman explained, "I do not mean the King your father, but the King of kings" – the Lord Jesus Christ. The Sabbath, he knew, is the Lord's day. So he could not think of using it for any purpose that was not appropriate for the day. He wanted to preserve the whole Sabbath, as far as possible, for the worship of God and for activities that would benefit his soul – apart, that is, from works of necessity and mercy. And going to get instructions for his ordinary work, even from somebody so important as the Prince, was certainly not necessary; nor was it an act of mercy, like attending to someone who was sick.

When the Prince, by then King George IV, had just two days more to live, he spoke about Bishop Porteus' visit 21 years before. He confessed that nothing now caused him more concern than to think back on the Sabbaths he had broken.

Be very careful not to commit sins against the Sabbath, or against any of the other Commandments. Unless you repent of your sins, not only will



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God hold them against you throughout eternity, but you may become very troubled in your conscience about these sins – just like the King was – before you leave this world. Ask the Lord to keep you from sin and to make you love the Sabbath. Ask Him too to make you turn away, in repentance, from all sin and look to Christ Jesus, in faith, as the Saviour of sinners.

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*For Younger Readers*

## **The Most Important Book**

**W**hat is the most important book in your house? Yes, it is the Bible. But why is it the most important book?

It is because God is speaking to you in it.

You are not yet able to understand everything that God is telling you. But there are some things you can understand.

You can understand that you do what is wrong. That is sin. And the Bible speaks a lot about sin. Every sin is against God.

But God can take away our sin through Jesus Christ. So you should pray, like someone prayed in the Bible: “God be merciful to me a sinner”.

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*For Junior Readers*

## **A Blessing in God's House**

**H**ave you ever thought what a privilege it is to be able to attend church? What a blessing it is to have parents who take you to church! Can you think of a Psalm that speaks of a love for God's house?

What about Psalm 84?

“How lovely is Thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts, to me!

The tabernacles of Thy grace how pleasant, Lord, they be!”

There was a young man in the north of Scotland about 200 years ago whose name was Hugh. People thought he was strong and good-looking; but he was also a bit proud. He did not always come to church, but one communion season he decided to attend the Saturday service. He was wearing a new outfit and he thought he looked very fine. But the godly minister who preached that day said something which the Spirit used to convict Hugh that he was a sinner.

Hugh now came to church every Sabbath. But he had such a sense of his sin that he felt he could not enter the building. So he would stand outside the door or near a window, hanging on to every word that the preacher said. He

listened to the Word of God with such attention that he did not notice what was happening around him. Sometimes rain drops fell from the roof onto his head, and in winter the water even turned into icicles on his hair. Can you imagine putting up with that so that you could listen to God's Word being read and preached?

One Sabbath that winter, it was snowing. And the wind was blowing the fallen snow into heaps around the church. A godly old elder, who had a warm interest in the young man, came up behind him. He pushed Hugh across the threshold into the shelter of the church.

That service was a time of great blessing to Hugh's soul and he went home rejoicing in Christ and in the gospel he had heard. He was to become very useful in the Church and the Lord blessed his work among the people of Ross-shire, as a catechist (someone who taught them the Catechism).

What about you? Do you value the house of God and listen hard so that you will hear what God the Lord will speak to your soul? Will you not pray that you would have the same love to God's house as Hugh had. David showed the same love when he wrote in Psalm 27:

“One thing I of the Lord desired, and will seek to obtain,  
That all days of my life I may within God's house remain.  
That I the beauty of the Lord behold may and admire,  
And that I in His holy place may reverently enquire”.

*J van Kralingen*

## Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word:

### **Quicken** (it means *to make alive*)

It is the Spirit that *quickeneth*; the flesh profiteth nothing (John 6:63).

**Precept.** I give thee charge in the sight of God, who *quickeneth* all things, and before Christ Jesus . . . that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 6:13,14).

**Promise.** But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised . . . up Christ from the dead shall also *quicken* your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth . . . in you (Romans 8:11).

**Prayer.** Revive and *quicken* me, O Lord, ev'n for Thine own name's sake;  
And do Thou, for Thy righteousness, my soul from trouble take  
(Psalm 143:11).

**Encouragement.** For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and *quickeneth* them; even so the Son *quickeneth* whom He will (John 5:21). S

# Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2013-14

## UK Names for Exercise 2

**Senior Section:** *Aberdeen:* Sarah Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle MacDonald. *Gairloch:* Donald Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Emma Norris. *Inverness:* John and Rebekah Maton. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew and Sam Munns. *Snizort:* Rebekah MacLeod. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot.

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## Looking Around Us

### Arrogance and Sleep

People have become “supremely arrogant” in ignoring the importance of sleep, say scientists from several universities, including Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, and Harvard in the USA. They warn that cutting down on sleep is leading to “serious health problems”. And they call on individuals and governments to take the problem seriously.

Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, infections and obesity have all been linked to reduced sleep. This, it seems, is because the body clock drives huge changes in the human body. A news report claims that this “stems from our evolutionary past”. The scientists argue that modern life means that many

people are now “living against” their body clocks, causing serious damage to their health and well-being.

Professor Russell Foster, of Oxford University, stated that people today are getting between one and two hours less sleep per night than 60 years ago. He claims that “we are the supremely arrogant species; we feel we can abandon four billion years of evolution and ignore the fact that we have evolved under a light-dark cycle”.

There is no doubt that it is worthwhile for these scientists to flag up our need for a good night’s sleep and the dangers for human health if we do not get enough sleep. But if, as people usually argue, evolution has no purpose behind it, it is difficult to accept the word *arrogant* to describe someone ignoring their “evolutionary past”.

The sad fact is that people are ignoring the facts about how the human race has come to exist. Mankind is not the result of a series of evolutionary accidents – nor is the universe or any part of it. God is the Creator; He created the universe and everything in it, including the human race. And He designed us in a particular way. So it is arrogant for us to try to live in a way that does not fit in with His design.

It is even more arrogant when people ignore God and try to live as if He did not exist. To go without enough sleep, night after night, may have serious consequences for this life; one of these consequences may be that our life will end sooner than if we were careful to live according to our Maker’s design. But there are more serious consequences from ignoring God.

“God hath made man upright”, we are told; but man arrogantly sinned against the holy God who created him. Indeed human beings “have sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastes 7:29); they have arrogantly devised many ways of sinning against God. What is worse: they arrogantly ignore God’s way of deliverance from sin and its consequences.

To ignore our bodily needs may have consequences, but to refuse to acknowledge God, confess our sin and listen to the provision that our Maker has made for our salvation will have far more serious consequences. The arrogance of refusing to believe in Jesus Christ leads to a lost eternity.

May sinners be delivered from their arrogance towards God and submit to the way of salvation that He is directing us to follow. He says, “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).

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