

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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Cover Picture: *The paddle steamer Waverley on the River Clyde in Glasgow.* See page 166.

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

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Volume 79

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“Don't Trifle; Don't Trifle”

Charles Simeon became a minister in Cambridge in 1782 in the face of a great deal of opposition. Many people locked the doors of their pews so that, even if they did not come to listen to Simeon themselves, no one else could sit there. Other people did come, but many of them had to stand. One reason for the opposition was Simeon's message: sin and salvation. Even though this is the message of the Bible, many people in the congregation wanted to listen to preaching that would not disturb their consciences.

But his position as a minister in this university town gave Simeon a great opportunity to influence students. Among those who were so influenced was Henry Martyn, a brilliant maths student. Simeon was used in Martyn's conversion and was a powerful influence on him as the student grew in grace. Martyn felt called to missionary work and reached India in 1806. He learned more than one Indian language and, with the help of local people, he translated the Bible into Urdu. He then went on to translate the Bible into Persian and Arabic. Clearly he had great skills in learning languages but he was obviously very diligent in whatever he did. In 1811 he sailed to what was then called Persia, but now Iran. He wanted to spend some time among Persian-speakers so that he could revise his translation of the Bible into that language. Sadly Martyn died in 1832, when he was just 31.

Sometime later Simeon went to London to collect a painting of Martyn which had been sent to him from India. Simeon took the painting home and hung it on a wall in one of his rooms. As he looked at the picture, Simeon used to say to those who visited him: “There! See that blessed man!” He would then remark on the expression on Martyn's face and comment: “No one looks at me as he does – he never takes his eyes off me, and seems always to be saying, ‘Be serious; be in earnest. Don't trifle; don't trifle.’” Then Simeon would add, “And I won't trifle; I won't trifle”.

To trifle is to treat something without the seriousness it ought to be given. So you are trifling with your opportunities if you do not take them seriously. One thing was obvious about Martyn: he did not trifle. He was serious about serving God and making the most of his opportunities.

If you are still in school, you are trifling if you do not listen to what your teacher says. You are trifling if you are only doodling when you should be doing a piece of work on your own. You are trifling if you play games all evening and do not get your homework done, or if you rush through your homework at the very last minute and do not do it properly. Education provides an opportunity for training your mind so that you may be more useful in later life.

No one is saying that young people should be working hard all the time from the moment they get out of bed in the morning until they climb back into bed in the evening; that would be unwise; they need to relax sometimes. And so do older people. But if you trifle with your opportunities, there will be consequences. You may fail your exams, or do less well than if you had worked seriously. Your trifling may put an end to hopes of doing well in university or of following the career you have set your heart on.

The same principles hold true if you are in college or university. While you may have more freedom to organise your studies in the way you want, that puts all the more responsibility on you to work seriously. You are to say to yourself: "Don't trifle; don't trifle".

Again, if you are working for an employer, you are being paid for the time you spend at work. All the more reason not to trifle. Remember what the Bible tells you: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). In other words: whatever you are doing, put effort into it; do not trifle. Many people work hard when their supervisor is around, but they put no effort into their work when no one is watching. Yet we should be clear that Someone is always watching and that Someone is God.

We are told: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). God sees everyone everywhere, whether they are converted or unconverted. It is something we should always remember, whatever we are doing. It is something that should make us say to ourselves, as Charles Simeon did: "Don't trifle; don't trifle". Looking at the picture, he always felt as if Henry Martyn was watching him, though obviously he was not. But Simeon would have been equally clear that God *was* watching him, and that was enough to remind him that he must not trifle.

Especially we must not trifle with our soul. We are sinners. Sin will keep us out of heaven unless it is forgiven and unless we are made holy. These blessings can only come from God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the One who came into this world to do all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners. And we have only a short time to find that salvation – the time that we spend in this world, before death comes.

Perhaps your response is that you know all that. But are you trifling about

those things? Let me set before you two reasons – obvious reasons – why you should take these things seriously, and take them seriously now.

First, you do not know how long you may be spared in this world; you may die far sooner than you expect. You may be called away into eternity before you stop trifling with your soul, before you take your soul seriously and seek salvation earnestly. Second, by trifling with your soul, you are missing an opportunity to serve God in this world for the rest of your life. If you become a follower of Christ you will at least serve God by trying to live a godly life. Then you will be something of an example for other people.

On the other hand, if you trifle with your soul and your opportunities to seek salvation; if you trifle with your Bible and the sermons you hear; if you trifle with what you have learned about true religion; then you are in danger of suggesting to other people by your example that these things do not really matter. How sad an ungodly example of that kind is, particularly if the result is that other sinners assume there is no reality in true religion and go down to a lost eternity.

You may promise yourself that you will not trifle for ever; you are sure that the time will come when you will seriously seek salvation. But stop now and consider the position you are in. Take to heart how dangerous it is, in an uncertain world, to go on trifling. Yes, God in His long-suffering – in spite of your trifling – may deliver you before it is too late. But how many sad memories you will have of wasted opportunities, for learning about the things of God and living to His glory! And how especially sad you will feel if, by going on in sin yourself, you have led other people astray – not least friends and relations, encouraging them by your words and by your example to continue in the broad way that leads to everlasting destruction.

You may never become a missionary to some other country and be involved in the work of Bible translation, as Henry Martyn was; you may never become a minister, even in your own country, like Charles Simeon. But if you make good use of your opportunities – if you do not trifle – you will live to the glory of God. However restricted the area in which you may spend your life, you may still do good. Even if you have no other opportunities to serve God, do not trifle with opportunities to pray. Pray for yourself; pray for your family; pray for your congregation; pray for the whole Church of God. Pray for your community; pray for your country; pray for the whole world. God hears prayer.

May God give you grace to resolve, like Simeon, “I won’t trifle; I won’t trifle”! And may He give you grace also to carry out that resolve throughout the rest of your life, in dependence on Himself! But if you try to depend on yourself, your efforts will end in disaster.

Who Will Steer the Right Course?

There were several seamen and their families in a congregation in Glasgow. Often, when the minister visited, the father was not at home; he was working on a ship – sailing, perhaps, in some far away part of the world. At other times, the seaman would be at home and might have some interesting tale to tell.

In one house, the minister found a seaman in his fifties. He was now unwell and would never go to sea again. One voyage stood out from all the others. He was the first mate, the second in command, of a large ship in the West Indies. They were in the centre of a bay with a curving rocky shore around it. A strong gale was blowing towards the land, but it should have been quite easy to steer the vessel out of the bay into the safety of open water. But the captain was drunk, quite incapable of carrying out his duties. Yet he insisted on steering the ship himself.

The mate offered to take over the ship's wheel, but the captain was determined to carry on. He claimed that he knew exactly what he should do to bring the ship safely into deep water; he thought that no one could do so except himself.

The mate waited for a few more minutes. The ship, probably a sailing vessel, was being blown towards the rocky shore. There was no time to be wasted; so he pushed the drunk captain aside and took the wheel himself. He brought the ship safely through the waves, and past the rocky point at the end of the bay.

The ship was safe, but had avoided the rocks with very little to spare. The mate had a powerful sense of the terrible danger he and the rest of the crew had been in. It had a tremendous effect on him. He trembled as he thought of how close he had come to death. Afterwards he was always very serious. He was conscious of the eternity to which he was so close. He must have felt that he had not been prepared to die. And he would have been in great danger of death if the ship had hit the rocks.

He began to seek peace with God and he found it in Christ Jesus, who died for sinners – sinners who must perish if they go on in their sins. And the peace of God in his soul supported him in all the other troubles he passed through in this world, including the illness from which he was suffering.

This story surely teaches us the importance of being ready to die. We are safe if, like the seaman, we trust in Christ. Then, if any unexpected danger meets us and brings our life to an end, we will be received into heaven.

But the minister thought of another lesson. Every human life, he said, is like a ship on the sea of time. It is carrying precious cargo and will have to

pass through many dangers. But who, or what, is steering the human ship? If it is a deceitful, unsaved heart, the ship (the human being) will go far off course. To change the idea a little: under the direction of a deceitful, unsaved heart, a person will go – and keep going – along the broad road that leads to everlasting destruction, to a lost eternity.

What must be done? A new heart must take control of the person, the human ship. It is God's work to create a new heart. So let us earnestly ask Him to create in us a new heart, so that we will look to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and go in the paths of new obedience. Then, as the minister said, "at the end of the voyage [the person] gets an abundant entrance into those new heavens and earth wherein 'there is no more sea'".

The Bible's Teaching on Professing Religion

2. Confessing Christ

Charles Hodge

This is another edited article from Hodge's book, *The Way of Life*. Last month's piece emphasised the duty of believers to acknowledge Christ publically.

In practice we reject God by neglecting, or refusing, this public profession of Him and His religion. Not only our heart, but our whole outward behaviour must be regulated by that religion. It forbids many things which the world allows; it commands many things which the world forbids. Obedience to these commands must include a public profession, because it distinguishes between Christ's disciples and the people of the world. This is one reason why the people of God are called *saints*. They are distinguished from others and set apart to God. If they can no longer be distinguished from those around them, they cannot be recognised as saints.

If their inward spirit and outward conduct do not mark them out as a special people, they are not Christians. A city set on an hill cannot be hidden. Christians deny themselves and take up their cross and daily follow Christ; their hearts are set on things above; they walk by faith and not by sight; they live to God and keep themselves unspotted from the world; so they must differ obviously from those whose spirit, principles and aims are all worldly. The Christian must acknowledge the cause of this difference. He must appeal to the authority of Christ as justifying how he behaves; so he cannot live as a Christian without confessing Christ.

Christ commands many specific duties which imply a public profession of religion. His Church, as a visible society, assumes the separation of a people who recognise His authority and profess to obey His laws. He sent

His disciples to go into all the world, to preach His gospel, make disciples, baptize them in His name, gather them into distinct societies and appoint officers over them to conduct public worship and carry out discipline. Thus His followers should make up a body that publicly acknowledges Him as their Head, and confesses Him as their Lord and Saviour before the world. How can anyone keep secret the fact that he is a Christian, when Christianity has this visible, organised form?

All believers are directed to associate with the Church, to gather with other Christians for public worship, and to unite with them in celebrating the Saviour's death. They are required to forsake sin, to serve God, to love the brethren, to live for others rather than for themselves, to persevere in prayer, to join in the public worship of God. And those who have a new heart will naturally delight in these things. So while Scripture makes the public confession of Christ a necessary duty, it is natural to the Christian heart. If no child needs to be commanded to confess a parent whom he loves, much less should the believer need to be forced to confess the Saviour – whom he regards as the brightness of the Father's glory, to whom he owes his redemption, and whom he hopes to worship and serve with saints and angels in heaven.

Does this suggest that no believer is ever ashamed of Jesus? Under some specially-difficult circumstances he may be afraid to acknowledge His truth or to be called a Christian. Peter once denied his Master. But no one can have right views of Christ and right feelings towards Him without habitually, openly and gladly acknowledging Him as his God and Saviour. He will esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. He will choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

To confess Christ is to recognise His character and claims. It is to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. It is to admit the truth of the doctrines He taught. It is to profess our allegiance to Him as our Lord and Saviour. This confession must be public; it must be made before men; it must be made with the mouth, and not left to be inferred from the conduct. This includes more than just calling oneself *Christian*, in distinction from pagan or Muslim. To acknowledge Christ merely as a good man, or an inspired teacher, is in fact to deny Him in His true character as the Son of God – as the propitiation for sin, the only Mediator and the sovereign Lord of the living and the dead. And to acknowledge the gospel as merely a code of morals is to reject it as the revelation of the grace of God.

The confession required is to acknowledge Christ publicly in His true character, and His gospel as it really is. It will not do to strip the gospel of

everything offensive to human pride and acknowledge the rest. People must accept the shame of professing what is a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. They must acknowledge their trust in a Saviour who is despised and rejected of men, and in doctrines which human reason can neither discover nor understand.

There are several ways in which this public confession is to be made. As already remarked a confession is included in obeying the commands of Christ. Obedience, therefore, is one form of confession; it always distinguishes the obedient as the followers of Christ. Again Christians may often be called on to assert the truth, to defend it against objectors, or to give a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. But the most important mode of confession is to make use of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. So much prominence is given to these institutions in the Word of God that every Christian should have clear ideas of what they are and of his own duty in relation to them.

The Fifth Commandment

1. "Honour Thy Father and Thy Mother"

Rev Donald Macdonald

This is the first section of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference.

The Fifth Commandment says, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). This is one of the ten words which the Lord gave to the Children of Israel. Moses received them on two tables of stone at Mount Sinai. We are told that it was God who spoke all these words (Exodus 20:1); this reveals their source and their authority. We are also told the reason for these words when He says, "I am Jehovah thy God" (Exodus 20:2) – the self-existent One who is faithful to His covenant and His promises and who bestowed such love and unmerited favour in redeeming His people from slavery.

As He is the self-existent One, He is above all other gods, which the heathen worship. It is because He is good that God's commands went forth, and they were engraved on stones. They began: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (or, in front of Me, or, before My face). This is the basis for all the other commands in the law. The first four reveal our duty to God; the other six reveal our duty to man. To obey them would provide evidence of our love and loyalty to God.

1. *The command.* It is: "Honour thy father and thy mother . . .". The law given through Moses required perfect obedience. "This do and thou shalt live" is the way to life as well as a rule of conduct, but this obedience had to be perfect in thought, word and action. No one is able, in this life, to keep the commandments of God perfectly but daily breaks them in thought, word and deed. But that inability does not lessen our obligation to the command.

The Larger Catechism asks, "Who are meant by father and mother in the Fifth Commandment?" It answers: "By father and mother, in the Fifth Commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, Church, or commonwealth".

(a) To honour *our parents*. This is to give them due reverence and obedience. This command is not confined to parents, it also includes Church and state. But before we try to examine, for a little, the breadth of the command, we must begin with the family, the nursery of the Church and of society. The word *honour* implies that it is a heavy responsibility to be the rightful guardians of children.

One writer calls parents "God's representatives". He says, "All government is rooted in the father and son". But it is rooted in a higher source: the Trinity. This is brought out in the teaching of Christ about Himself as a divine person: "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30); "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He was the obedient Son in the truest sense, although equal with God; yet in the form of a servant He was subject to His Father's will. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. He did no sin, yet He was the sin-bearer.

We should note that the power of parents was ordained by God both for their children's physical and spiritual well-being. The very titles *father* and *mother* are not just a clear distinction between male and female but they indicate that they have authority. This authority and order is to be traced up to God Himself.

(b) The *extent* of this honour. When we are born and are growing up as little children, we are totally dependent on their love. But it is not only then that we are to honour, love and respect our parents. Our responsibility to them is basically the same when we become more independent and are able to fend for ourselves. We are not to abandon them; we are to continue to love and respect them as long as we have them. And it is our duty to care for them in their old age, when they cannot take care of themselves. The word to *honour* can mean to relieve them in necessity (more will be said about this later).

2. *God's displeasure against those who abuse their parents.* Several verses

in the Old Testament law draw our attention to this. Among them is: “Ye shall fear every man his father and his mother” (Leviticus 19:3). In Exodus 21:15,17 we are warned about such abuse and the threat of the death penalty that came with it: “He that smiteth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. . . . And he that curseth his father or mother shall surely be put to death.” We learn from these scriptures the solemnity of rebellion and disobedience, especially when they lead to violence to parents. It exposes these children, not only to the law of the land, but more seriously to the just judgement of God and to eternal punishment. The abuse of parents or of any lawful authority reflects people’s hatred to God; they do not follow the law of love. It reflects the state of their hearts.

We may note in Matthew 15:3-5 how the Pharisees made this commandment of no effect through their traditions. Jesus asked, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” He spoke like this because, when parents were in need, their children were loosed from their obligation to support them if they dedicated their wealth as a gift to the temple.

The Larger Catechism asks, “What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?” (Question 128). The answer is: “The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such refractory [that is, stubborn] and scandalous carriage [behaviour], as proves a shame and dishonour to them and their government [ruling].

The Larger Catechism also asks, “What is the general scope of the Fifth Commandment?” (Question 126). It answers: “The general scope of the Fifth Commandment is, the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors or equals”. Love is the fulfilling of the law.

3. *The purpose of the moral law.* In the light of what has just been said, this part of God’s revelation, says Paul, is not designed for the righteous but for sinners, “for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Timothy 1:9-11). “Disobedience to parents” is a mark of a godless age (Romans 1).

If there had been no sin, there would have been no Ten Commandments; the law would have been written on the human heart as it was in the original

creation. But “the law entered, that the offence might abound”; it not just shows the fact that all are sinners, but shows the extent of their depravity in thought and word, as well as in action. The law cannot bring us back from a state of sin to a state of holiness, but it tells us of our great need of another way of being brought back – a need supplied in the Person and work of Christ. Thomas Boston, a Scottish minister, once said that the law “is necessary in this state of sin, especially for the preservation of the world, which, without rules and government in families, churches and states, would be like a ship without a pilot, amongst dangerous rocks”.

The “Holy Man” and the Sinner

Lakhiram's father was the official gatekeeper of Ahmednagar, a city in western India, and the office was handed down from generation to generation. One day a Hindu holy man, a beggar, came to the city. Lakhiram's father went to the man and told him: “Take my son and make him a holy man like yourself”. The next day the man left Ahmednagar with Lakhiram and began years of travel from one so-called holy site to another as they journeyed round much of India – from the far south to the Himalayan mountains in the north. They visited hundreds of rivers and mountains and temples that, in the Hindu religion, were claimed to be holy.

After several years, Lakhiram arrived back in Ahmednagar and sat down at the gate where he used to play when he was a boy. His father, he now learned, had died; and he recognised the new gatekeeper as one of his old friends. As Lakhiram was catching up on the changes that had taken place while he had been away on pilgrimage, another friend came along. He was Bhagooba, the father of the new gatekeeper. He looked at Lakhiram and said, “Well, Mr Pilgrim, you have spent many years visiting shrines and rivers and all holy places, and you know the holy book Kubeer almost by heart. Tell me, after all that, what are you? Are you a saint, or are you sinner?”

Lakhiram was offended by what he considered a strange question. But he restrained himself because he had been taught that anger is a disgrace to a holy man. He thought over the question, recalling to himself all that he had done on his travels: “I have visited every shrine and washed in every holy river; I have observed every fast and every religious observance commanded in Kubeer. I *ought* to be a saint.” He remembered too something his holy book had told him: that until such things as anger and pride are driven out of people's hearts, they are still sinners. So he had to confess to Bhagooba: “I am a sinner”.

"Indeed, a sinner still," Bhagooba asked, "after so many religious deeds? When then do you expect to be a saint? And if you are not a saint, how do you expect to see God?"

Lakhiram quoted from his holy book the various duties to be performed to get rid of sin and make him fit for a better world. Then Bhagooba answered, "But you have performed all these, for many years. What hope have you of attaining to holiness in future years, having so completely failed in those that are past?"

This answer made Lakhiram angry, especially because the man belonged to a very low caste; he was a so-called "untouchable". This man, Lakhiram knew, had spent his whole life doing one of the lowliest of jobs, while he had spent his time reading, studying and travelling. He expected everyone to think of him as a very holy man. He gave answers to Bhagooba's questions, relying on what he had learned from his holy book. But Bhagooba was not satisfied with these answers. The answers did not correspond to what he had learned from his holy book, the Bible; he knew that it contains what the living God has revealed. So he could be totally confident that what the Bible says is true and that whatever contradicts it is false.

Then Lakhiram asked him: "How do *you* expect to see God and to reach heaven? Have you reached sinless perfection?"

"Not I," Bhagooba replied; "I am an unworthy sinner, but I believe that the Almighty became man, under the name of Jesus, the Christ." He spoke of Jesus dying to bear the punishment due to sinners, and said that "whoever believes in Him shall obtain eternal life through His merits".

Lakhiram now realised that Bhagooba had forsaken the faith of his fathers and was now following Christianity. He confessed, "I gave free vent to my anger and out of this mouth many evil words went forth against him and against Jesus Christ". Clearly he was not even following the standards of his own religion.

He argued with Bhagooba for some time and Bhagooba at last told Lakhiram: "There is no use in *our* talking. Come to the missionary and hear what he has to say."

"I went", Lakhiram recalled some years afterwards, "and had a long conversation with the missionary. I often went to him after this and had many arguments with him. For two whole years I fought with him, and at the end of that time the missionary, or rather God's Holy Spirit, conquered."

When he told about what had happened, he described himself as "now for six years the servant of Jesus Christ". He knew that he could not earn salvation by anything he could do; he knew that no one can become holy unless God Himself will change that person's heart. He would agree with

Bhagooba that he was “an unworthy sinner” who must depend entirely on the merits of Jesus Christ for salvation. Yet he did have the beginnings of true holiness and, when he died, God made him perfectly holy.

For Junior Readers

Led to Seek God

What do you know about Timothy? He has two books in the New Testament named after him, has he not? These are both letters (or epistles) written by the Apostle Paul to Timothy. At the beginning of the second letter he says something about Timothy's background – the fact that he had a godly mother, called Eunice, and a godly grandmother, named Lois.

These godly women taught Timothy from the Scriptures in his youth. And in the Lord's time he also came to have the same saving faith in Christ that they had. It is a great blessing for young people to be brought up in a home where God is honoured and worshipped. It is a privilege which you should value highly.

There was a boy called John Robertson who was born in Glasgow in 1830. His parents were godly people and taught their children from their earliest years to know the Lord. The Lord blessed their labours and answered their prayers for several of their children.

John had a sister who died at the age of 18 and who was already saved. And he had a brother who was only 12 years old when he died. This brother also had been converted. So do not think that you are too young to seek the Lord or to know Him!

John himself was only 15 when he came to know the Lord. It was through the reading of the Bible at family worship that the Holy Spirit blessed him. The chapter that they read was Luke 22, which is about Christ's sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest and crucifixion.

He himself told the story in later years: “When the words [of verse 44], ‘And being in an agony’, were read, they struck me so forcibly that I was led to go to seek after God. . . . O that I may never . . . cease seeking God as long as I live.” Is this not a proof of the great blessing of having family worship in your home?

John Robertson went to live in Canada later in his life and trained for the ministry there. In 1895 he returned to Scotland to live in Glasgow and began to worship with the Free Presbyterian congregation there. He was then received by the Synod as a retired minister and was most useful in helping the minister in Glasgow for 17 years. Afterwards he took services in the

Greenock congregation until not long before he died. He was then 84 years old and had spent nearly 70 years following the Lord.

Will you not follow God's invitation in Psalm 34 while you are still young, as John Robertson did:

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

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

His Prayer Was Heard

One day, a little boy and his sister went out for a walk. The boy was just 5 and his sister was younger. I do not know if they told anyone where they were going. I hope you would not go anywhere without telling somebody.

As they went along, it started to snow. The snow became heavier and it was lying on the ground. The two children were getting tired. Perhaps they were finding it difficult to walk in the snow.

The little girl wanted to lie down and sleep. That would have been very dangerous. She would have got very cold. The boy said he could not go to sleep unless he said his prayers. He was taught to pray before he went to bed. So he went on his knees and said the Lord's Prayer:

“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

By this time, somebody at home was very worried. So a group of grown-ups went out looking for the children. No one knew where they were. But as the boy was praying, someone heard him. Soon the little ones were found and brought back to their warm home.

Someone else heard the boy pray. Who was that? It was God. That was the real reason why the two children were found and brought home safely.

I hope you pray to God. Pray to Him when there is something wrong. But pray to Him too when nothing seems to be wrong. More than anything else, ask Him to take all your sins away, for Jesus' sake.

The Best Service

C H Spurgeon

Another chapter abridged from Spurgeon's book, *Advice to a Young Christian*.

When young people start off in life, they may ask an older person: I should like to get into such and such a business, but is it a good one? You have been in it for years; how do you find it?

Some will have to warn them that their trade is going down, and that there is no work to be had. Others will say that their business is very stressful, and they would get out of it if they could. Another will answer: I have found it all right; I have been able to earn a living; I recommend you to try it.

I give my own experience. I have never regretted that I entered the service of the Lord. Surely at some time since I became His servant, I should have found out if there was anything wrong in the religion of Jesus and that I was under a delusion. But it has never been so. I have been sorry about many things I have done, but I have never regretted that I trusted in Christ and became His servant. In times of deep depression – and I have had plenty of them – I have feared many things, but I have never suspected the goodness of my Master, the truth of His teaching, or the excellence of His service.

Nor have I wished to go back to serve Satan and sin. If we had been mindful of the country from whence we came out, we have had many opportunities to return. But never have I said to myself, I am sorry I am a Christian. So I think I may honestly, heartily, and from experience recommend to you the service I have found so good. I have been a bad enough servant, but never had a servant so lovable a Master or so blessed a service.

I would add this personal testimony: the service of God is so blessed that I would like to die in it! When, through pain, I have not been able to preach, I have taken my pen to write, and found much joy in making books for Jesus. And when I have been unable to use my pen, I have wanted to talk about my Master to somebody or other, and I have tried to do so. When David Brainerd was very ill and could not preach to the Indians, somebody found him sitting up in bed, teaching a little Indian boy the alphabet, so that he might learn to read the Bible. He said, "If I cannot serve God one way, I will in another. I will never leave off this blessed service." This is my resolve too. And, for your own good, I commend the service of God to you.

To serve God is the most reasonable thing in the world; He made you. He keeps you in being; should that being not be spent to His glory? If you had a cow, how long would you keep it if it was of no use to you? If you had a dog and it never took notice of you, would you not soon tire of such a creature? Which of you would make some piece of machinery if you did not hope it

would be of some use to you? Now, God has made you; your body is a wonderful mechanism, and your soul is a wonderful thing. Will you never obey Him with your body or think of Him with your mind? This is Jehovah's own lament: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider."

To have lived so long without God is a terrible robbery; how dare you continue in this way? And you have often insulted God, spoken against Him, profaned His day, neglected His Book, turned your back on the Son of His love? Will you not stop following such an evil course? There are some men who cannot bear being annoyed for five minutes. It is "a word and a blow" with them; only the blow often comes first. But here is God provoked for years together, and yet He bears patiently with us. If He has made us, it is His due that we should be His servants.

This is the most honourable service there can ever be. Did you say, "Lord, I am Thy servant"? I see, in imagination, a seraph from heaven. What does he say? "O Lord, I am Thy servant." When cherubim and seraphim count it their glory to be God's servants, who among us will think it a mean office? You are in grand company, young friend, if you are a servant of God.

If I had to engage in a trade, I should like to spend my time and strength in one which did no hurt to anybody but did good to many. Somehow, I do not think I should like to deal in deadly weapons, certainly not in the accursed drink. It is a grand thing if a young person can follow a calling in which he may do well for himself, and do well to others at the same time. It is a fine thing not to grow rich by grinding the faces of the poor, or by stinting the wages of the servant behind the counter, but to lift others up too. But a servant of God is doing good all along; there is no part of God's service which can do any harm to anybody. This service is good for yourself, and it is good for others; for what does God ask in His service but to love Him with all our heart and love our neighbour as ourselves?

It is the best-paying work under heaven. "Not always today", someone may say. Yet I venture to say, "Always today". How so? Certainly not in hard cash, but in what is better. A quiet conscience is better than gold, and to know that you are doing good is something more satisfying in life than to get rich or famous. He that trusts in God is paid for anything he may suffer in the cause of God by his own peace of mind. There was once a martyr in Switzerland standing barefooted on the faggots and about to be burnt to death – no pleasant prospect. He asked the magistrate supervising his execution to come near. He said, "Will you please lay your hand on my heart. If it beats any faster than it ordinarily beats, do not believe my religion." The magistrate,

all in a tremble, laid his hand on the martyr's chest, and found that he was just as calm as if he was going to his bed rather than to the flames. Godliness is great gain to him that has it.

I think that all that we can get in this world is trifling, because we must leave it, or it must leave us, in a very short time. How short life is! The only thing worth having is what I can have for ever. The supreme reward of being a servant of God is hereafter. If you should serve God and meet with losses here for Christ's sake, you may count them "light affliction which is but for a moment". But there is a resurrection of the dead, a judgement to come, a life eternal, a heaven of unutterable splendour; and there is a place there for everyone who becomes a true servant of the living God.

I think I hear somebody saying, I do not want to be a servant. You cannot help it. You must be somebody's servant. Then I will serve myself, he replies. But if you serve yourself, you will serve a fool. The man who serves himself is the slave of a slave, and I cannot imagine a more degrading position. You will certainly serve somebody.

Look at this city full of "free thinkers". Is anyone so easily deceived as the man who will not believe in the Bible? He swallows a ton of difficulties, and yet complains that we have swallowed an ounce of them. And look at the "free-liver"; what a bondage his life is! "Who hath woe? Who hath redness of eyes" but the slave of strong drink? Who has rottenness in the bones but the slave of his passions? Is there any bondsman beneath the sun that is half such a slave as he who will be led tonight of his lusts like a bullock to the slaughter, going to his own damnation, and even to the ruin of his body? If I must be a slave, I will be a slave to a savage, but never to myself. You must be a servant to somebody; there is no getting through the world without it. And if you are a servant to yourself, your bondage will be terrible. Kings and queens are usually the most wearied servants of all. The higher men climb, the more they have to serve their fellow men. You must serve. O that you would enter the service of God!

There is room in the service of God. Other places are crowded. Hundreds of young men go from place to place and beg for the opportunity to earn a livelihood; sadly they often beg in vain. How I wish you may find the employment you seek! But God is willing to receive you. And let me tell you that, if you enter His service, it will help you in everything else you have to do in this life. They say that a Christian is a fool. They are not always fools who are called so; they are sometimes fools who use those names. I like a Christian to be all the better in every respect for being a Christian. He should be a better servant, a better tradesman and a better master. What you can now do well you might do better by becoming a servant of God.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2013-14

UK Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick:* Rebecca Ross. *Edinburgh:* Annabelle MacDonald. *Glasgow:* Emma Norris. *Kyle:* Nathan Whear. *London:* Andrew Munns. *Tonbridge:* Heidi Playfoot.
Award with Merit: *Gairloch:* Donald MacKenzie. *Snizort:* Rebekah MacLeod.
Award: *London:* Sam Munns.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Stornoway:* Joanna Maclean. *Tonbridge:* James Playfoot.
Trowbridge: Abigail Broome.
Awards with Merit: *Edinburgh:* Mairi Campbell. *Glasgow:* Katie Macpherson, Rachel Smith.
Inverness: Daniel Maton. *Point:* Isla Macdonald. *Snizort:* Sarah Macleod. *Tonbridge:* Katie Playfoot.
Trowbridge: Daniel Broome.
Awards: *Barnoldswick:* Lily-Ann Metcalfe. *Gairloch:* Andrew Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Jonathan Norris. *Kyle:* Sarah Whear.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Dingwall:* Hannah Mackenzie, Matthew Ross. *Gairloch:* Roddie Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Iain Macpherson. *Inverness:* Jessica Maton. *Stornoway:* Lucienne Doig. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot.
Awards with Merit: *Barnoldswick:* Christopher Metcalfe. *Edinburgh:* Bradley Morrison, Anna Campbell. *Glasgow:* Jessica Norris. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *London:* Henry Munns. *Point:* Duncan J Macdonald.
Awards: *Cheadle:* Henry L Johnson. *Dingwall:* Laura Macleod. *Snizort:* Jonathan Macleod. *Stornoway:* Jamie Doig, Cara Macleod, Matthew Macleod.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Brighton:* Katherine Hills. *Dingwall:* Esther Ross. *Glasgow:* Rebecca Smith. *London:* David Munns. *North Harris:* Hannah Jardine, Cara and Connor Macdonald.
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Awards: *Barnoldswick:* Robert Metcalfe, Claudia van Essen. *Edinburgh:* Ross Campbell, Fraser Morrison. *Inverness:* Victoria Maton. *North Harris:* Fraser Morrison.

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Looking Around Us

Always Profitable

Dame Kathleen Ollerenshaw has died at the age of 101. Possibly none of us had heard of her until she had passed away. But she was a brilliant

mathematician, in spite of being totally deaf. Although she could not hear anything, she got through her interview, to become a student at Oxford University, by lip-reading.

Those who live to a great age may find many of their close friends and relations are taken away before themselves. This was true of Dame Kathleen, who lost her husband and both her sons. After their deaths she threw herself into what was probably her greatest interest – mathematics. “It’s no good grieving,” she said, “and maths can take you away from your troubles.”

It is true that in trouble, such as the loss of loved ones, it makes things easier when you have something to occupy your mind. For instance, those who have no work to do will find their position much more difficult than those who make themselves busy.

Yet death always comes with a message to those who are left behind. It is a reminder that they too must die and pass into eternity to meet their Maker. So the Bible says, “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12). Sooner or later, we must all die. And, unless we find forgiveness in Christ for all our sins, death can only send us down to a lost eternity.

But the children of God have another great blessing in trouble – when death, for instance, has entered their family or their circle of friends. They know their way to the throne of grace. In other words, they know where to go with their sore hearts. They know to go to God in prayer, for Jesus’ sake. He is able to support them in their sorrow, and He assures them that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). He has promised to care for them always.

Maths is part of God’s creation. People like Dame Kathleen have discovered many useful mathematical facts. They did not make these things up; they were discovering what has been true since the beginning. That is why many parts of mathematics are exactly what is needed to work out problems in, perhaps, every branch of science. Science too is investigating the world which God has made.

Yet there is something far more important to our existence than maths and science, important though they are. Even for this life, there is something very much lacking if we do not have a new heart and if we have never trusted in Christ. “Godliness”, the Bible tells us, “is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). It will always be profitable. But whatever we may have for this life, we will have nothing to help us for the life that is to come unless we find Christ in this world. He still says, “Come unto Me”.

Price £1.00