

# 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:** Houseboats on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in Lancashire. See page 205.

### The Young People’s Magazine

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# The Young People's Magazine

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## Only One Life

**H**iroshi Mikitani is the head of Rakuten, what may be described as the Japanese answer to Amazon, the huge internet selling operation based in Seattle, USA. Mikitani began his career with the Industrial Bank of Japan, with a successful career ahead of him. But he became dissatisfied; he wanted to do something bigger. In 1995 a huge earthquake hit Kobe, a city near where he grew up. Mikitani had to search the rubble for his uncle and aunt, who were missing in the devastation caused by the quake. But his efforts were fruitless; his uncle and aunt were dead.

“It was at that moment”, Mikitani wrote later, “that I realised just how tenuous life really is.” And from that consciousness of the faint hold we have of life, he concluded, “We only have one life to live, so we should live it to the fullest”. He decided to launch out in business. He began to sell online; now it is everything from eggs to furniture and electrical goods. One assumes that success in business is Mikitani’s idea of living life to the fullest.

But is this a *biblical* outlook on life? That is what matters. Only if we follow what God has revealed in the Bible will we get safely through this life and safely into the next world. Our own ideas will send us in completely the wrong direction. While it is true that we only have one life in this world, death is not the end of everything. We will continue to exist beyond death – either in hell or in heaven. We need to take both of these places seriously, for they really do exist. We must be serious about avoiding the one and being prepared for entering the other.

It is only through Jesus Christ that we can enter heaven. We are all sinners, and no one who is unholy can get to heaven. So we need to be made holy. And if the good work of grace begins in our hearts in this life – so that we start to become holy – God has promised that He will finish that work. All those who have the beginnings of holiness in this world will be fit to enter heaven when they die. And heaven will bring complete and endless satisfaction to everyone who is brought there.

Think of the jailer in Philippi, when Paul and Silas were thrown into the inner cell in his prison. Perhaps, when he was appointed to the position of

jailer, he felt he had found real fulfilment in life. But when the earthquake shook the prison and all the doors opened, all his hopes collapsed; he feared that all the prisoners would escape and his life would be in danger. All he could do was to ask these two prisoners: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

How good that they knew the right answer to his question! And that answer is what we *all* need to hear and to obey: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". We must trust, as the jailer did, in Christ as the One who died in the place of sinners, bearing the punishment they deserve for their sins. And, as Paul and Silas assured the jailer, all who do believe in Him will be saved. They will all be brought to heaven to enjoy its perfect blessedness for ever.

Faith in Jesus Christ lies at the foundation of a biblical outlook on life. But what does such an outlook demand, in practice, as the believer goes on through life? Rev Alexander McPherson suggested five principles (in a Youth Conference paper he presented in 1974).

1. *To follow the moral law.* He described this as "the most obvious" principle. "Because of the First commandment," he said, "public worship is given the main place in our Sabbath observance and engaged in also during the week". And, he added, "we worship privately morning and evening" and say grace at mealtimes. He noted that other Commandments give reasons "for abstaining from novel-reading, the theatre and the cinema, with their radio and TV counterparts". And today he would no doubt have warned also about sinful sites on the internet.

2. *Not conforming to the world.* Mr McPherson explained that *the world*, in this sense, means its people who have not been reconciled to God and are concentrating "on worldly interests, pleasures and aims". We must "bear in mind that the world is the province of the devil". So we are to avoid "pleasures, interests, attitudes, customs and fashions" which are worldly. And "there are the fashions of the world which have their origin in the attempts of worldly persons to be different and so draw attention to themselves". He noted, in particular, "fashions and female clothing which are immodest, such as the miniskirt and the low neck". And male clothing can also be an example of worldliness.

3. *Taking Christ as our example.* Mr McPherson highlighted "meekness and humility of manner, speech and conduct" and the "patient endurance of injury and blame". Because Christ was perfectly holy, there is "a strong call to holiness in the entire range of the Christian's activities".

4. *Human example.* "There are two sides to this." First, we are to follow the godly example of believers in the Bible. And "the way of life of those who are known and honoured as spiritually-minded, godly and well-balanced

Christians can well form an example for young Christians to follow”. Second, “we should so live that our own example will harm no one”.

5. *Living to the glory of God.* Mr McPherson told his hearers to ask, “Will my actions tend to God’s glory? Will they be a shining forth of God’s grace within me in the form of words and deeds, in a way of life that cannot be condemned and which will glorify the Father which is in heaven?”

We only have one life in which we may glorify God in the face of all the opposition we may meet in a fallen world, where Satan will do all in his power to tempt us to sin. And the influence of those who follow him is towards worldliness. So we ought, in dependence on God’s grace, always to resist the devil and all who support him in his wicked work.

By no means all of God’s children are successful in the ordinary affairs of this life. Many of them have been very poor or have suffered severe illness or the various other troubles that people experience in this fallen world. One godly man who experienced severe poverty was James Turton, who lived in the mining village of Haydock in Lancashire. One day in the 1890s he had no money to pay for anything; indeed he was in debt. He was getting ready to go to Manchester to meet the men to whom he owed money.

His wife was also a believer; yet in a bout of unbelief she could not see past the difficulties that were pressing on them so heavily. She asked him: “What is the use of getting ready? You have nothing, and you cannot walk so far. What will you do?”

Trustingly, he answered, “Just be quiet and see what God will do”.

God honoured his faith. Soon afterwards a woman came to the door of their house and placed some money in his hand. She told him: “This will perhaps help you. Pay me back anytime.” And the meeting in Manchester went well – no doubt in answer to the Turtons’ prayers.

That we only have one life is an important lesson to learn. But the main purpose of this one life in the world is not to be successful or famous or wealthy; lasting fulfilment cannot come from any of these things. The main purpose of life is to prepare for the next world, to have our sins forgiven and to turn from our own ways to serve the living God, to live to His glory.

Yes, some of God’s children have been very successful in some areas of life. They may have become famous; they may have ended up with a lot of money. But no one who is truly a child of God will consider that to achieve any of these things is to live life to the fullest. They have learned to seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness; they recognise that all these other things are very much secondary. That is how *we* should think too. Let us seek a biblical outlook on life, if we do not already have that. And if we do, let us seek to live more and more under its influence.

## “Too Late!”

John was far from well. He was probably over 70. All his life he had been addicted to gambling, which is an ungodly way of trying to make money. Gamblers do not care how much money other people lose if only they might become rich. But very often gamblers never become rich; again and again they lose money – sometimes a large amount of money.

John had come to a town for the races there, so that he could bet on the horses. Many other people had come for the same reason, and the inn where he usually stayed was full. With him was his daughter, Annie, who was perhaps 10 years old. He turned wearily away from the inn and walked a few steps down the street, leaning on Annie. A woman saw them and was so sorry for him – he looked so exhausted – that she invited them into her home for the night.

A district visitor – someone who visited homes in the area on behalf of a church – called. He found John lying on a bed exhausted; indeed he seemed to be unconscious. He sat down beside John's bed and spoke to him about Jesus as the “fountain opened. . . for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1). John just shook his head as if to say: Too late!

Each day the visitor went back to see John. Now John's conscience was awake; he could see God's broken law; he knew that he was dying; he could almost feel the torments of hell. But he had not found the way of peace; he was not able to look to Christ Jesus as the One who “came into the world to save sinners”. One day he told the visitor: “O if I could only believe that Jesus would save *me*! But I have sinned past forgiveness; it is too late – too late!”

He passed some terrible nights, not able to sleep and imagining that he saw around him those whom he had led into sin. He would cry out: “I am dying. What is death? Where am I going? The devil has got me. He is dragging me down to hell. I see them all, all there.” He imagined that he was seeing them all making signs with their hands and calling him to join them. “No, no,” he would cry, “I am not ready yet. Let me go! Let me go!”

Not surprisingly, John was very easily annoyed after these sleepless nights. Annie tried to do what she could to please him. But one day he asked her to do something unreasonable, and she did not do it. John was so annoyed that he hit her hard. She ran out of the house and threw herself down in front of a minister who happened to be passing. She cried out: “Save me from my father!”

The minister was sorry for her. He took her by the hand and went into the house with her.

The minister prayed earnestly with John, asking God to bless the dying man's soul. Time and again, he returned to the house to encourage John to repent of his sins and turn to the Saviour for pardon – even although his life was now almost over.

At last the Holy Spirit began to touch his heart. One day he told the visitor what happened when the minister and someone else had called on him: “There was something they said to me the other day; there was something they said about Jesus that went right to my heart. But I have been such an obstinate sinner.” He was confessing that he had spent too long stubbornly resisting the truth and refusing to come to Christ.

There was a restlessness about John. One day he insisted on being taken to a village which was perhaps 100 miles away. There his mother and some other family members lay buried. He claimed that he could not die unless he was taken there. With great difficulty he managed to get half-dressed, and then he fainted. For two days he lay half-clothed, not able to move, but still determined to leave.

Then, with much difficulty, he was taken to the railway station, and a few hours' journey on a train took him to a town near the village he wanted to get to. A cart was hired to take John and Annie to the village. It was getting dark that cold October evening when they arrived, but no one would give them a bed. In the end, a minister persuaded those who were running the local inn to take John and Annie in. It was his last night in this world. His last words were: “Lord, remember me”.

Let us now try to learn some lessons.

1. It is a sad story, but the sadness is very much lessened if God blessed to him what the men said about Jesus so that he began truly to trust in the Saviour. If that was so, then John's soul went straight to heaven the moment he died. And how wonderful if he was saved, after a life of sin and of carelessness about his soul. How appropriate then his last words were – the words of the thief on the cross, who had lived a sinful, careless life but at the very end looked to Jesus and was saved.

2. But it was tremendously dangerous for John to continue in carelessness about his soul until almost the last moment of his life. How easily he could have drifted away into a lost eternity if God had not sent the district visitor and the minister to point him to the Saviour! God is very gracious, and He is all-powerful, but we must never presume that He will save us at the last moment if we go on in a course of sin and carelessness.

Remember these words in the Bible: “*Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). You are to seek salvation today, not at some other time of your choosing. Now is the time – today is

the day – that God has appointed. And we have no right to reject God's appointment. He knows what is best. His is perfect wisdom. Let us never think that we are wiser than God. Let us submit now to the call of God: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

3. Solemnly, if John's imagination painted such terrible pictures about a lost eternity, how terrible the reality must be for those who go there, especially if they have known something about the way by which they could escape. How this should emphasise for us the vital importance of fleeing at once from the wrath to come!

4. Supposing John was saved, as one would like to believe, did he have any opportunity to show a watching world that he now loved God and wanted to serve Him? Perhaps he did, but it must have been very short. How foolish we are if we want to follow our own sinful ways as long as we dare, in the hope of turning to God when it seems too dangerous to continue any further in the ways of sin. Those who seek Christ early and find Him *may* die soon afterwards – just as anyone else may die when they are young – but those who spend many years trusting in God have a wonderful opportunity to serve Him in the face of His enemies. And God takes glory to Himself in giving them grace to do so.

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## The Bible's Teaching on Professing Religion

### 4. The Benefits of the Sacraments

*Charles Hodge*

Last month's section from Hodge's book, *The Way of Life*, explained the meaning of the word *sacrament*, used for Baptism and the Lord's Supper. God has appointed these sacraments, and they are signs of spiritual blessings.

**W**e would be quite wrong if we supposed that the sacraments were merely signs. The Bible teaches us that they are also seals – that Christ appointed them to certify to believers their interest in the blessings of the covenant of grace. Among us a seal is used to confirm that a document is genuine. Coming down to our weakness, God has been pleased, not only to promise pardon and purity to believers, but to appoint the sacraments as seals of His promises.

God gave Noah the simple assurance that the earth would not be destroyed a second time by a flood. That might have been a sufficient foundation for him to trust that it would be so, but God saw fit to appoint the rainbow to confirm His covenant for ever. So, whenever a rainbow appears, people can



take it not only as a sign of the sun returning after rain, but as a pledge, or a guarantee of God's promise.

Similarly, because God wished to show His people that His promise could not be changed, He has confirmed it by these seals. They are designed to assure the believer that, just as he receives the signs of the blessings of the covenant, so surely shall he receive the blessings themselves. This is plain from the fact that Paul says that circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith; that is, it was designed to assure Abraham and his descendants that God would treat as righteous all who believed His words. And we may see something similar in Baptism; this follows from the way in which Paul speaks (in Colossians 2:11, 12) of the spiritual meaning of circumcision, and then of Baptism.

And the Saviour said about the Lord's Supper: "This cup is the new testament in My blood" – that is, the new covenant was put into effect by His blood. The cup is the appointed memorial of that blood; so it is the memorial of the covenant itself and confirms it. It assures us that God has promised the blessings of that covenant to all believers. Thus Baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible pledges. They confirm the fact that Christ has died, that His death has been accepted as a propitiation – a sacrifice that turns away God's anger because of sin. And God, for Christ's sake, will grant pardon, sanctification and eternal life to all who believe.

On the side of God, the sacraments are seals; but the Christian who receives them implies that he is willingly promising to devote himself to the service of Christ. The gospel is represented as a covenant. Christ Himself so describes it. But there are two parties in a covenant. God promises pardon and salvation to His people; they promise to believe and obey in His strength. The sacraments are the seals of this covenant. In setting them up, God binds Himself to keep His promise; His people, by receiving them, bind themselves to trust and serve Him.

This idea is included in what is said about Baptism in Romans 6:3, 4, where believers are said to walk in newness of life. It is included also in the formula of Baptism (Matthew 28:19), for if we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we imply that we willingly give ourselves up to God as our Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier. It is probably in this view of Baptism and the Lord's Supper that the name *sacraments* was so generally applied to them. As the oath by which the Roman soldier set himself apart to army service was called a "sacrament", so the same word is used for the ordinances in which the believer binds himself to the service of Christ.

As God has appointed Baptism and the Lord's Supper, we may ask, What good do they do? What benefits may we expect from them? The usual answer

most true Christians give is that the sacraments are effective means of grace. They not only show forth the benefits that they represent but actually confer them on those who worthily receive them. As the Word of God, when applied by the Spirit, has real power, so the sacraments are means that God has appointed to be effective signs of grace. When they are accompanied by His Spirit, Baptism and the Lord's Supper convey, to believers, the blessings of which they are signs. Nothing less than this can satisfy the strong language of the Scriptures on this subject, or the experience of God's people.

The Christian, by faith, sees in the water of Baptism the emblem of the purifying influence of the blood and Spirit of Christ. In the bread and wine of the the Lord's Supper he sees the memorials of the Saviour's death. He knows that they are appointed to be a pledge of the salvation of all believers. And he receives Christ as he receives the appointed symbols of His grace; he receives anew the forgiveness of his sins; he enters into fellowship with God, and his soul is filled with the Holy Ghost. Thus, through these ordinances, believers very often find their strength renewed, their faith confirmed, and their hearts filled with joy and love.

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*For Junior Readers*

## **“Was Jonah a Good Man?”**

Edward had a question for his mother. “Was Jonah a good man?” he asked her.

“Why do you ask such a question?” she answered; “Was he not one of the prophets?”

“Yes, but did that make him a good man? Balaam, you know, was a prophet, but not like Isaiah and Jeremiah. He did very wickedly and died a wicked man.”

“But tell me, Edward, why do you doubt Jonah's being a good man?”

“Why, you know that when God told him to go to Nineveh and preach, he did not want to go, and took passage in a ship for Tarshish, to run away from the presence of the Lord. He knew he was doing wrong, and yet he would go. Then, in the storm, when the heathen sailors were praying everyone to his god, Jonah was asleep. And when they waked him and wished him to pray to his God if he had any, instead of praying, he advised them to throw him into the sea. Then, when God saved him alive out of the fish's belly and he went to Nineveh and preached so that the people repented, and God was pleased not to destroy them, Jonah was offended that his prophecy was not fulfilled. Was not such conduct very strange for a prophet of God?”

“Very strange conduct, certainly – especially for a prophet whose prayer in the belly of the fish had been heard, and who had preached so that a city repented.”

“And then, when God made a gourd to grow up in one night, for a shade, so much to Jonah’s comfort, and he was glad of the gourd, how he lost his temper when a worm bit it! And how he replied to God’s question about his being angry, saying, ‘I do well to be angry, even unto death’! How could he be fit to go to heaven, with such an impatient, fault-finding spirit towards God, who was so kind to him? Do you think you shall see Jonah in heaven, Mam?”

Edward’s mother knew that she was a sinner too; so she wanted to speak very carefully – perhaps more carefully than she needed to. She said, “I do not know whether I shall ever get to heaven myself. If I do, I shall be surprised to find myself there, and Jonah too.”

“I am not afraid but that you will go to heaven. But I think, if Jonah is saved, he will be saved ‘so as by fire’, as you were explaining to me what Paul says. But, Mam, tell me why you think Jonah will be saved in heaven at last.”

Edward’s mother explained to him that God saves sinners only because of His mercy – His kindness to those who are needy, because of sin. We cannot possibly be saved *because* of what we do; we cannot earn salvation. And, she said, God saves good people in spite of the great sins that they have done. She spoke about Abraham, who deceived Pharaoh, telling him that Sarah was his sister when she was really his wife. Isaac did the same sort of thing. And Peter denied Jesus.

“But”, she went on, “we have reason to believe that God forgave them all, even their great sins, and took them all to heaven. And if so, then why not poor, strange Jonah too?”

God, she said, tells even those who are most wicked: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). And she told Edward that “Paul called himself ‘the chief of sinners’, and he was so; and he says also, ‘But I obtained mercy’. So you see that God, of His rich grace, may even have saved wicked, strange Jonah.”

And Edward at last admitted, “Yes, I see it is possible”.

Clearly his mother had been teaching Edward well. He knew a lot about the Bible and he was thinking about what he heard. That was good. But I hope, when he found it so easy to recognise Jonah’s various sins, that he remembered that he was a sinner too, and that he needed God’s mercy. It is always much easier to see other people’s sins than our own. We have all

sinned, and so we all need to confess them to God and to seek forgiveness, for Jesus' sake.

Just as God forgave Jonah all his sins – and forgave all these other men too – so He is able to forgive you. He calls to *you*: “Come now, and let us reason together . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”. See that you listen to God when He speaks to you.

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## The Fifth Commandment

### 3. How Parents Should Treat Their Children

*Rev Donald Macdonald*

The final point in last month's article was about setting out on the journey through life and showing respect to those around us who are senior to us.

**(d)** *Discipline*. In a sinful world, where we are confronted with the great principles of right and wrong, there must be discipline. We have a duty to approve and commend what is good and, if we are in authority, we have a duty to punish what is wrong. This is the law of the Creator; the law reflects the nature of God.

The ideas of right and wrong must be established in the home, the family unit, in the light of God's law. Where there is law, there must be discipline; God has ordained that also. God said of Abraham: “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Genesis 18:19).

This principle extends to the Church, and to the state in a well-ordered society. *The Larger Catechism* tells us, “Superiors are styled Father and Mother, both to teach them in all duties toward their inferiors, like natural parents, to express love and tenderness to them, according to their several relations; and to work inferiors to a greater willingness and cheerfulness in performing their duties to their superiors, as to their parents” (Answer 125).

Again: “The honour which inferiors owe to their superiors is, all due reverence in heart, word, and behaviour; prayer and thanksgiving for them; imitation of their virtues and graces; willing obedience to their lawful commands and counsels; due submission to their corrections; fidelity [faithfulness] to, defence, and maintenance [support] of their persons and authority, according to their several ranks, and the nature of their places; bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love, that so they may be an honour to them and to their government” (Answer 127).

In the matter of discipline, our attention is drawn to Ephesians 6:4 and

Colossians 3:21. Paul teaches that children are to obey their parents. The Bible also states: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). The word *nurture* in Ephesians 6:4, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord", includes both correction and instruction. "Parents must keep their children in subjection", said Thomas Boston; "if they will lose their authority over them, their children will be the children of Belial indeed, without a yoke". And he added that the end of this would "be sad". He was echoing the words of Proverbs 29:15: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame".

*The Larger Catechism* also teaches: "It is required of superiors, according to that power they receive from God, and that relation wherein they stand, to love, pray for, and bless their inferiors; to instruct, counsel, and admonish them; countenancing, commending, and rewarding such as do well; and discountenancing, reproving, and chastising such as do ill; protecting, and providing for them all things necessary for soul and body: and by grave, wise, holy, and exemplary carriage [behaviour], to procure glory to God, honour to themselves, and so to preserve that authority which God hath put upon them" (Answer 129).

(e) *Punishment*. As Boston says, children "must not only be corrected by reproof, but, when the need is, with stripes". To support his statement, he refers to Proverbs 19:18: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying". This is not considered politically correct today in Western society, including modern Britain. Biblical wisdom has been replaced by children's rights and, often, their freedom to do what they please. Large sections of society suffer from marriage breakdown, but children also suffer from the lack of discipline and parental control. This has devastating effects on the rest of society.

If we are truly religious, there should be love. Love, both to God and to their children, should make parents discipline their children. To endure chastening is an evidence of being God's spiritual children and under His government. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb 12:7; see also verses 9-11). Boston exhorts parents to begin early, "as soon as they are capable to be bettered by it; and let your love not restrain you. As ever ye would keep them out of hell, correct them." He refers to Proverbs 23:13,14: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

Boston gives further advice: "Go about your work with an eye to the Lord

for success. Correct thy child in faith of the promise, 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him' (Proverbs 22:15), as means appointed by God for that end. It is our belief [faith] and not our blows that will do the business. No doubt the neglect of this [faith in God] is one main cause why correction does no good." He also exhorts parents to correct their children, not only for faults against themselves, but also for sins against God. Parents may show anger for a word spoken against themselves, but fail to do anything for sins against God and His law – such as swearing, lying and Sabbath-breaking.

(f) *A Warning.* There is another side to the concept of discipline that is too often forgotten. It is the overuse or abuse of discipline. Paul writes, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:21; see also Ephesians 6:4). When the punishment exceeds the crime, this may result in rebellion. Sometimes parents forget, when their children are young, that they will one day grow up. It is not just that children may rebel and resent their parents when they grow older, but through the overuse of discipline, they may be discouraged from following the gospel; they may even turn their backs entirely upon religion. This is especially so when the discipline is not administered in a spirit of love, but rather arises out of anger. In later life, many parents regret actions that they have caused such discouragement.

On the other hand, many have later regretted that they did not exercise proper discipline on their children in their younger years. Again Boston says, "Take heed that you correct not your children just to satisfy your own passion [anger]; for 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God'. That is revenge, not correction. Let the end of your correction be the child's good. It were good that parents, if they find themselves in a passion, would first beat down their own disordered spirits, before they beat the child."

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### *For Younger Readers*

## **Five Gold Coins**

A fisherman lived on the Isle of Portland. He was having a hard time. He was not able to catch many fish.

Perhaps it was because there was a lot of stormy weather and he was not able to get out to sea in his boat. If it was stormy, it would be too dangerous to go to sea. Perhaps it was not stormy, but there were only a few fish swimming around at that time.

Whatever was wrong, the fisherman had a big problem. He had nothing to eat. What could he do?

His daughter's husband was called Tom. One morning, at family worship, Tom prayed very earnestly to God, as he often did. That morning, Tom asked God to help the fisherman. His wife noticed how earnest Tom was in prayer that day, and she spoke about it later. She told him that she believed God would hear his prayers.

The next day, the fisherman was preparing to go out fishing. He went to dig for bait in the sand and mud beside the sea. His bait would be worms or other little creatures he would put on his hooks. He hoped that the fish would come to eat the bait. Then the fisherman could pull in his line, with the fish still hanging on to the hooks, and he would have something to eat or to sell.

But the fisherman found something better than bait. He stuck his spade into the sand and mud and turned it over a few times. And what did he see? He saw five gold coins.

All was now well. He could buy all he needed. His daughter was so glad to tell Tom all about it when he came home for his meal. She told him that God heard his prayers.

God is still the same. He still hears prayer. You must always pray to Him for everything you need. Most of all, ask Him to give you a new heart and to take away your sin.

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## Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word:

### Trust

*Trust* in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

**Precept.** *Trust* ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength (Isaiah 26:4).

**Promise.** They that *trust* in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed but abideth for ever (Psalm 125:1).

**Prayer.** Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my *trust* (Psalm 16:1).

**Encouragement.** The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that *trust* in Him (Nahum 1:7).

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

*W S Plumer*

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. The text was Luke 16:19-31.

**I**n these words we have an account of two men who were very different in heart, in life, and in their last end.

1. One of them was a beggar. His name was Lazarus. This word means the *help of God*. And God was the only help he had. He had no money, no home, no friends, no helper. Some people – we do not know who – laid him at the entrance to the rich man's house. But he himself was helpless and was full of sores. We do not know what was the nature or the cause of his disease, but it made him a loathing to himself and others. He seems to have received very little care. But the dogs came and licked his sores.

He seems to have been a modest man. He wished to be fed with what was commonly given to the dogs, the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Whether he even got as much as that we do not know. How long he was sick and sore and lying at the gate, we do not know. He may have had many a dark night and many a dull day.

But, at last, an end of pain comes to the righteous. So it is added that the beggar died. It is possible that no one saw him die, but the angels were about him and God was with him. We are not even told that he was buried. Possibly someone was kind enough to dig a grave and put away his poor body.

But all was well with his soul. He was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. What feelings he must have had as he said farewell to this cold and cruel world! Cold and nakedness, hunger and thirst, pain and sickness, all gone for ever! How bright and glorious, how kind and brotherly, were his new companions! They carried him on and on till he reached Abraham's bosom, and at the feast above he took his seat next to that great believer, now glorified in heaven. Lazarus seems to have been a great saint. He bore very great trials – perhaps no less than those of Abraham, the father of the faithful – and he was very patient in them. He had now come out of the furnace like gold purified seven times.

2. The other of these two men was rich – how rich we do not know, except that he had clothing commonly worn by kings and princes. He was clothed in purple and fine linen. And he kept a fine table; he “fared sumptuously every day”. He doubtless had his friends around him. He believed in good eating and good drinking. Those who were fond of his fine food no doubt praised him much. They praised him to each other. They called him a good fellow.

How long he lived in this way we do not know, but he outlived Lazarus.



At last, it is said, “The rich man also died”. Whether he died suddenly or lingered long in pain, whether in his last hours his mind was calm or troubled, we do not know. But we are told that he was buried. It is probable there was a great funeral. Perhaps some one made a big speech and spoke of his many good qualities. Perhaps many lies were told.

But while these things were going on in this world, the rich man was very differently occupied in another world. “In hell he lifted up his eyes. being in torments.” On earth he had paid no heed to eternal things, but at last he lifted up his eyes. He began to pay attention – to look at things as they really were. He was in hell, in torments.

The first thing he saw was Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. How changed was his state, but not more so than that of Lazarus! He was a Jew and cried, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”. God had hid His face from him.

It was too late to pray to the Most High. He knew this and could lift his voice no higher than to a creature. His prayer itself was desperate. He talked of putting out the flames of hell with a drop of water. Abraham told him that he had seen his good days, and Lazarus his evil days, but now justice required that things should be changed. Abraham also said that the will of God would not allow any such thing – men could neither go from heaven to hell, or from hell to heaven.

The rich man then asked that Lazarus might come back to earth and be a witness for the truth to the rich man’s five brothers. But Abraham said, “They have Moses and the prophets”. If they would not hear the words of Scripture, they would not be persuaded even if someone rose from the dead.

**Lessons.** 1. The rich man was not lost because he was rich, but because he loved riches, trusted in them, and was satisfied with them. His god was gold. It is not wicked to be rich, but “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”.

2. Lazarus was not saved because he was poor, but because he was poor in spirit. Some poor people steal and take God’s name in vain. Some expect great riches hereafter because they are so poor in this world. But if they live and die in sin, they will be poorer in the next world than they are in this.

3. The doctrine of universal salvation is not true. Lazarus is in Abraham’s bosom, in heaven. But the rich man is in hell, in torments. Surely there is a difference in people’s future states. All Scripture teaches the same thing. Daniel says, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). There will be an eternal difference between the states of saints and

sinners. Jesus Christ teaches this. The wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46).

4. The question is sometimes asked, Is there really fire in hell? The Bible seems to teach that there is. But whether there is or not, every wicked person has in himself enough to make a hell as soon as God leaves him to himself. Memory will bring up before his mind the good books he once read, the good services he once attended, the good teaching he once received, the sermons he once heard, the sacraments he once saw. Memory will remind people of revivals of religion, of striking and solemn warnings, of all their sins and the aggravations of them. It will show them what they lost. It will remind them of misspent time, of Sabbaths broken, of the Holy Ghost resisted, and of the Saviour slighted.

The imagination too will be put to work. It will look far into the future and see worse things coming. Miserable as the rich man was in hell, he feared that in future his five brethren might come there. All the elements of damnation are already in a sinful soul; and one drop of God's wrath would set them on fire as in a moment.

5. You may refuse to cry for mercy now, but the time is coming when the most careless person on earth will call for mercy as loudly as this rich man. Blessed is he who now asks for mercy and obtains it.

6. The rich man did not intend to lose his soul, and yet he did. You may not intend to lose your soul and yet you may. Live on in sin, be careless, let all good opportunities pass away – and death will do the rest.

7. Balaam said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his”. It is true that no one can put too high a value on a safe death. But some wish to die a Christian's death who do not want to lead a Christian's life? Are you one of that sort?

8. We will never have any more proof of the truth of religion than we have now. God will work no miracle to save anyone. If you will not trust in Christ, He will not come back to earth to die again for you.

9. The next life will make much plain that was dark and mysterious here. Lazarus may have wondered that he was left to beg for food. But that is all plain enough now. One kind of carpet is made with the ragged side towards the weavers. The handsome figures are on the other side. Two godly men, who understood weaving, were talking about the dark events of providence. At last one said, “Wait, my friend, till the Lord turns the carpet. We shall see beautiful figures then.” Yes, all will be well for the righteous then.

10. What we do here affects the next world. Today's thoughts and acts will affect us millions of ages from now. Everyone is drawing on his soul a picture that will meet him in heaven or hell. We are all painting for eternity.

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## Australia and NZ Youth Conference

The Youth Conference for 2015 will be held in Australia, at Winmalee Christian Conference Centre, from Tuesday, January 6, to Thursday, January 8, God willing. The cost is \$120 per person. For further information and to book a place, please contact Mr J van Praag as soon as possible at [jnvp@aapt.net.au](mailto:jnvp@aapt.net.au).

The papers are expected to be as follows:

- 1. Answering the Question: What must I do to be Saved?** *Rev J D Smith*
  - 2. Seeking God's Guidance in the Decisions of Life** *Rev G B Macdonald*
  - 3. Pictures from Pilgrim's Progress** *Mr Cornell Van Kralingen*
  - 4. The Origins and Errors of the Roman Catholic Church**  
*Mr Calvin MacKenzie*
  - 5. Scriptural (Presbyterian) Church Government** *Mr Hank Optland*
  - 6. Historical Events in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1989**  
*Mr Dick Vermeulen*
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## Looking Around Us

### British Values?

Theresa May, the United Kingdom Home Secretary, claims that British values will prevail in the end, in the battle against extremism. She has in mind particularly those Muslims who, perhaps after fighting in Syria, might return to the UK and blow up airliners or buildings, or carry out some other barbarous action.

But what are British values? One hundred years ago, it might have been quite clear what was meant: values based on the Bible – in particular, some degree of respect for the Christian God and obedience, more or less, to the Ten Commandments. Yet much has changed since then. Nowadays, no politician wants to say much about Christianity and the Bible. But they still appreciate ideas of fairness, for instance, and respect for human life, that flow from our Christian heritage, which is based on the teaching of the Bible.

Another question has to be asked: How will British values prevail in the face of violence that is intended to promote a false religion? A praying people trusting in God might be able to come to this conclusion. But a people who are largely rejecting God, and ignoring the way of salvation which He has revealed, have no right to speak of the success of British values, especially when some of the ideas now being put forward as British values are certainly *not* biblical.

Before Britain can expect to influence those who might turn out to be dangerous, the country must turn to God in true repentance. We must turn from our love of sin and our neglect of God; we must look to Christ Jesus as the Saviour whom God has appointed; we must seek to live to God's glory, both as a nation and as individuals; and we must pray that He would keep us safe from violence and that He would deliver us from all false religion – and from the attempt to live without any religion. May God so bless Britain, and every other country too!

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## “It Is not too Late”

No words can declare,  
No fancy can paint,  
What rage and despair,  
What hopeless complaint,  
Fill Satan's dark dwelling,  
The prison beneath;  
What weeping and yelling,  
And gnashing of teeth!

Yet sinners will choose  
This dreadful abode;  
Each madly pursues  
The dangerous road;  
Though God give them warning,  
They onward will go;  
They answer with scorning,  
And rush upon woe.

How sad to behold  
The rich and the poor,  
The young and the old,  
All blindly secure,  
All posting to ruin,  
Refusing to stop.  
Ah, think what you're doing,  
While yet there is hope.

How weak is your hand,  
To fight with the Lord!  
How can you withstand  
The edge of His sword?  
What hope of escaping  
For those who oppose,  
When hell is wide gaping  
To swallow His foes?

How oft have you dared  
The Lord to His face!  
Yet still you are spared  
To hear of His grace.  
O pray for repentance  
And life-giving faith,  
Before the just sentence  
Consign you to death.

It is not too late  
To Jesus to flee;  
His mercy is great,  
His pardon is free.  
His blood has such virtue,  
For all that believe,  
That nothing can hurt you,  
If Him you receive.

*John Newton*

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