

# 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*



***April 2015***

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**Cover Picture:** A rear view of the Lobengula church in Bulawayo, where the Zimbabwe Youth Conference was held. See page 77.

## The Young People's Magazine

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## The Rebellious King

**R**ehoboam was Solomon's son and succeeded him as king over Israel. He made a very bad start to his reign, rejecting a request from the people to rule over them in a milder way. His older advisers wanted him to do what the people asked. But the younger men around him persuaded him to tell his subjects that he would be even harsher than his father. He listened to the younger advisers, and his foolish decision provoked a rebellion by the 10 tribes in the northern part of Israel. This rebellion was led by Jeroboam, who became king of these 10 tribes.

Then Jeroboam became concerned about his people going to the feasts, special gatherings to worship God, which were held three times a year at God's temple in Jerusalem. He was afraid that, if they kept on going to Jerusalem, they might want to become King Rehoboam's subjects again. Jeroboam feared that, if this happened, he would be killed.

How could he get out of his difficulty? His solution was to set up two golden calves to represent God – one at each end of his kingdom, in Bethel and Dan. The people could worship these calves instead of having to go up to Jerusalem; it would save them so much trouble – or so Jeroboam claimed. And, the King would have told himself, he would feel much more secure in his kingdom.

But Jeroboam did not take God into account when he decided to make these idols, nor did he think about the Ten Commandments – especially the Second, which forbids worshipping God by idols. How dangerous it is to ignore God and go on as if He has not revealed directions for how we should live! God's commands are for our good, to show us a safe way through life.

We may imagine that we will escape various dangers and difficulties by ignoring God and going our own ways. But we cannot have His blessing if we do not wish to obey His commandments, nor can we expect to reach heaven. "Them that honour Me", God tells us, "I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30). And He adds, "They that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed". This means especially that, if they do not repent, God will think so little of them that He will send them to a lost eternity.

Another matter Jeroboam ignored was God's providence. God is in control of everything that happens. He was in control of everything that happened in Jeroboam's life. So He was well able to keep Jeroboam safe from all danger throughout his life. Had the King done what was right, God would have blessed him. This teaches us that the safest course through life is to obey God in all that He tells us, depending on Him to lead us on safely. Especially we should remember His command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners (see 1 John 3:23). God will care for all who trust in the Saviour.

Jeroboam chose a day for a religious festival in Bethel, where he had made an altar, as well as a calf. He seems to have chosen the day for no particular reason. Certainly he paid no attention to the days that God had appointed for gathering at His temple. In any case, the worship at Bethel was false worship; it was idolatrous; it was a rejection of God's authority. But, even in this detail, Jeroboam was showing that he was determined to go his own way – away from God.

Yet, in spite of his idolatry and disobedience, God did not cast him away at once. He sent a prophet from Judah, who arrived in Bethel just as Jeroboam was going to burn incense at the altar. The prophet had a message from God: about Josiah, who would reign over Judah several generations later. King Josiah would offer up the idolatrous priests on the altar – no doubt this would be as a punishment; it would show that the worship that took place there was not proper worship. And the prophet gave a sign, to prove that his prophecy about Josiah would come about. The altar, the prophet predicted, would split open and the ashes on it would be poured out.

At once Jeroboam stretched out his hand and said, "Lay hold on him" – calling for the prophet to be arrested. But the arm he stretched out dried up; it became paralysed and rigid; he could not pull it back in. And, just as the prophet had said, the altar split open and the ashes poured out. Surely it was now perfectly obvious that it was God who had sent this man to Bethel, and so his prophecy about Josiah would certainly be fulfilled also.

Yet all that Jeroboam was concerned about was his arm, not obedience to God. He had no thought of being reconciled to Him who will bring every work into judgement – and every hidden motive. He only asked the prophet to pray to God for his hand to be healed.

One cannot imagine that the King ever thought of asking the prophet to pray that God would give him a new heart. Then he would have a great blessing, for he would want to obey God in everything. The prophet did pray for Jeroboam, and his hand was completely healed. But the King went on in his sin; he did not pay any attention to the warning that God had given. Nor

did he pay attention to God's goodness in healing his arm, so that he was able to use it again.

This sin of Jeroboam in turning away from the true God was so serious that it is mentioned again and again in the Books of the Kings. All the later kings of Israel are described like this: "He walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin" (1 Kings 16:26). How sad! If only Jeroboam had listened to the warning that the prophet brought to him from God! It might have been the beginning of new life for him and for his country. How important for *us* to listen to what God has to say to us in the Bible!

Notice too the great danger of leading other people astray from what is right. Because Jeroboam set up places for idolatrous worship, many of his people were involved in that sin. His son Nadab, who followed him as king, naturally followed in his father's sinful steps. And all the other kings who reigned after him were influenced in the same direction – and some of them, like King Ahab, went even further. Ask God to keep you from being a bad example, influencing those around you to commit sin.

See that you take advantage of the warnings that come to you from God. Turn from your sins. No, you cannot do this in your own strength, but come to God in the name of Jesus Christ asking for His blessing on your soul, for "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to *give* repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Notice that repentance and forgiveness are gifts, given freely to sinners for the sake of Christ. Come to Him as a needy sinner, for He is able to supply all your needs – not least the needs of your soul.

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*For Junior Readers*

## God Answers Prayer

I hope you know the answer to the *Shorter Catechism* question, "What is prayer?" It is: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies".

The Bible encourages us to do so. In Philippians 4, for example, we are told: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." And "every thing" means just that: every worry, every problem – big or small, about your soul or anything else. You are to pray about it. It does not have to be very important; nothing is too unimportant for you to pray about. As one writer said, "Our great matters are

little to God's infinite power, and our little matters are great to God's fatherly love". So you can pray about them all!

In days gone by, when many people were very poor, they often went short of food – something you perhaps cannot even imagine today. But this made them depend more on the Lord to provide for them in a most practical way.

There was a godly man in Ross-shire called Andrew Sutherland. One Saturday evening, a business man was passing and called at his home. He was invited to stay over the weekend, although the family only had enough food left for the Sabbath.

On the Monday morning, as the visitor was about to leave, Andrew said to him: "Stop, you must not go without your breakfast!"

Knowing that the cupboard was empty, Andrew's wife whispered to him: "Don't you know that we have nothing left to breakfast on?"

Yet Andrew replied aloud: "Put the plates out on the table". Then he left the room and knelt down to pray. His prayer began: "Lord, emptiness is our side of the covenant; fullness is Thy side of it. Here is our emptiness; where is Thy fullness?"

He went on praying in this way till he was interrupted by a knock at the door of the house. At the door was a kindly neighbour bringing food for them. It was already cooked and ready to be eaten! The Lord had provided their breakfast in that wonderful way, in answer to Andrew's prayer.

Another event, not so long ago, also shows how ready the Lord is to answer prayer. There was a godly man in the north of Scotland, called Donald. He was a gamekeeper. As part of his job, he had to go out on the hills with rich men who were shooting deer. These keepers had to go with the men to where the animals were and help them find a good position for shooting.

After the animals were killed, the keepers had to drag them back to where a pony and cart were waiting. One day a deer had been shot, but it had fallen some distance away. The heather was so thick that no one could see the animal. So Donald had no idea which direction he had to go to find it.

What could he do? He got down on his knees in the heather and prayed that the Lord would direct him to the right place. As he stood up, he saw a bird flying in the distance. As he watched, it circled round over a certain spot and then flew on. That was his answer! He fixed his eye on that spot and headed towards it – and there was the deer! How wonderful to have a God who is willing to hear prayer!

You should learn from these godly men that you can pray about everything. You should say with the Psalmist, "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice" (Psalm 55:16-17). *J van Kralingen*

# A Prayer that Suits Us All

*W S Plumer*

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. The text for this sermon was: "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133).

**D**ominion is rule, or power. It is whatever is the supreme power. It may be lawful, as the dominion of a parent over his child, or that of God over all His creatures. Or it may be unlawful, as the dominion of someone who takes control of a nation but has no right to do so, or as that of Satan.

There are three classes of God's creatures who are accountable to Him:

1. Some are in no way under the dominion of sin. Such are holy angels and the spirits of human beings who have been made perfect in heaven.

2. Others are fully under the power of sin. Such are fallen angels. Such are wicked people, whether living or dead.

3. Some people, who were once slaves of sin, have cast off its authority and fight against it. At times it gains the advantage over them, but they shall yet conquer it completely. Now they hate and resist it, and they would wish to be free from it. Through weakness, fear, or sudden temptation they may go astray. But they are not under sin's reigning power; they do not want to serve it; they love holiness. Nor is it their habit to serve sin. Iniquity is dying out in them. Grace is increasing. God has set them free. In them are fulfilled the promises: "He will subdue our iniquities" (Micah 7:19); "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14). God's Word cannot fail. If Christ is in our hearts, He is there as a conqueror.

So if sin is not the master of good men here – and shall in every case be put down at last – why should we pray, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me"? This is a fair question. In reply it may be said:

1. *Prayer against sin in every form and degree is a very suitable way to express our hatred of it.* He who has no heart so to pray has no right sense either of his own weakness or of the real nature of sin. He knows not how evil and bitter it is to forsake the Lord.

2. *Prayer against all sin is one of the best ways to preserve us against every sin.* Right prayer implies some godly fear, and without that there is no piety. Prayer shows self-distrust; and he who is full of self-confidence is all wrong. Right prayer shows that we know God, and that He is able to help us. And how shall we better gain His aid than in humble, earnest prayer?

3. *He who does not watch and pray has not been born again;* he has no evidence that he is a new creature. A hope of salvation is a delusion if carelessness in sin does not make us question it. No one can leave sin thoroughly till he loathes it. He who does not hate all sin does not really hate any sin.

4. So weak is man, so many and strong are his enemies that, *without vast new supplies of grace, the best would soon fall into the deepest guilt and misery.* He who thinks it safe to lean on his own strength and play with sin is already half-ruined. The best need to be sprinkled daily with Christ's blood and need daily supplies of grace to hold them up. For these let us pray.

5. *He who truly prays that sin may not have dominion over him really wishes to be set free from all sin.* His wish is that Satan may gain no advantage over him, that temptation may never succeed against him, and that no iniquity may be pleasant to his heart.

Such a prayer is suitable for us all, for one sin leads to another. Actual sin powerfully tends to produce habits of sinning. One denial of Christ led Peter to deny his Saviour twice more. Prevention is better than cure. This is true of diseases of the body; it is also true of soul diseases. Sin is evil in its nature. Left to itself, it works death, nothing else. It is the chief element of hell. It dishonours God, and makes people bold in rebelling against Him.

"Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." This prayer suits us all. He who truly hates any sin really hates every sin. General statements deceive. It is good to come to particulars. If someone allows himself to break one commandment, he virtually breaks all the commandments. One spark of fire may blow up a store of explosives. One leak will sink a ship. One sin reigning in anyone will damn his soul. We must hate all sin. Tears, terrors, vows, solemn professions of sorrow are no sure signs of a changed heart.

If these things are so, it follows: 1. *All who prefer anything above God are under the dominion of sin.* They who choose wealth, fame, ease, strife or pleasure, choose sin. It is their master. All godly people take the Lord to be their God. They desire what pleases Him. Their hearts go strongly out after what is good. The wicked are not so. God is not in all their thoughts. They do not love Him. They love anything more than Him. One goes to his farm, one to his trade, one to his drink, one to his schemes of ambition – with eagerness. They love these things. Their hearts are set on them. Custom, conscience, or respect for others may lead them to church or to prayer. But their hearts are not in these things. Their God is the world. They love it. They prefer it. They serve it. They are under the dominion of some sin.

2. *If God's mercies do not lead people to holy living, they are under the dominion of sin.* Some are more thankful for a cup of cold water than others are for a kingdom. Indeed, some are not really thankful to God for anything. They love the gift but not the Giver. They pervert God's blessings to pride, luxury, covetousness and hardness of heart. They do not really thank God for the gift of His Son, for they reject His mercy and trample on His laws. It is true that a man who does not love Jesus Christ is a bad man.



3. *He who is not made better by the afflictions which God sends him has sin for his master.* Perhaps the Lord has taken away his loved ones or his wealth; he is facing disease or some other trial. The right use of these trials is to humble him, withdraw him from the world, and break off his hot pursuit of earthly things. But they have no such effect. He is as proud, as hardened, as spiteful, as unbelieving, as much opposed to prayer, as ever he was. Surely he is under the dominion of sin.

4. *Some people feel God's commands dreary and unwelcome.* Surely they are under the power of sin. Some think they love God's law because there are some commandments they do not break outwardly. They forget that the love of money is idolatry, that filthy desires are adultery, that hatred is murder, that borrowing money without a good hope of repaying it is theft. They never love the Lord their God with all their heart and mind and soul and strength. They never love their neighbours as themselves.

5. *All who hate the humbling doctrines of the gospel are under the power of sin.* God's Word says that man is blind, ignorant, guilty, polluted, naked and helpless. It says we are justly condemned for both original and actual sin. It says that if anyone is ever pardoned, it must be through favour which he does not deserve – by merits not his own, and in a way that will give all the glory to God. When one's heart rebels against such truths, or dislikes them, he is under the power of sin.

6. *We cannot safely think better of those who were once impressed with eternal things but are now careless.* They once began to flee from Sodom, but they turned back. They once put their hands to the plough, but now they look back. They have returned with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. How many partial and temporary reformatations there are! How many good resolutions are made only to be broken! The road to hell is paved with them. Some never keep a single promise they make to God. All such are under the dominion of sin.

**Application.** But if Christ is found in us the hope of glory; if we have taken Him to be our Prophet, Priest and King; if His name is to us as ointment poured forth; if He is precious to our souls; if we think His reproach to be greater riches than the treasures of earth; if we had rather suffer than sin; if we rest the whole weight of our salvation on His righteousness; if we delight in His ordinances; if we esteem all His precepts concerning all things to be right; if we count His service a privilege; if we faint for the longing we have for His grace and presence; if we hate all iniquity, even the thought of foolishness; if we strive to have perfect holiness in the fear of God; if we weep over our shortcomings; if we greatly long to be made like Christ; then we are Christ's servants and friends, and we shall be for ever saved.

## The Power of God's Word

A colporteur was walking along a village street in France; he was going about his work, travelling round the area distributing Bibles and perhaps other religious books. He saw a group of people standing at a cottage door and he could hear a woman's desperate wailing coming from inside. He asked what had happened, and they told him that Madame Bardon's only son, George, had fallen from his boat into the river and drowned. He was a friendly man, they said, just 30.

Some of them had been trying to comfort the mother, but it was no use; she only wept more bitterly. "You are only cold comforters," she told them. "None of your words can do me any good."

One of them had called for the priest, thinking he would be better able to comfort the woman. But they were wrong; she wept as bitterly after his visit as before.

Could I call on the distressed mother? the colporteur asked the people. "Why not?" one of them answered. "Anybody may enter; she takes no notice of it. She does nothing but weep."

The man entered the sad house and saw the poor woman kneeling beside her bed on which her son's body lay. The colporteur noticed a Bible lying on the body. It was exactly the kind of Bible that he distributed, he noted. The woman was wringing her hands in despair, looking around her wildly and asking, "Who can comfort me?"

The colporteur answered her question; he would give her comfort, he told her.

She looked at him wildly and asked, "How? You?"

Then he realised he had not spoken as carefully as he ought to have done and told her: "I am just a man and can only speak human words, but you need divine words".

"Divine. I will have none of them!" And, in her ignorance, she blamed God for cruelly taking away her son.

The colporteur interrupted in a kindly way and pointed to the Bible and said in a voice of authority: "Here is comfort for you; you can find it nowhere else".

"No, no; comfort is not there. I have sought for it, but have been deceived."

"What have you done?"

"George had told me that this book could work miracles. And I believed it was so, when I took up this book which George bought a year ago." He often read it and said wonderful things about it, she went on. "He said that if I would do like him, read that book and pray, it would give life to me."

But she misunderstood her son's meaning. He was speaking about the spiritual life the Bible can give when it is applied by the Holy Spirit; she thought that the book could bring life back to someone, like her son, who had died. So she had picked up the Bible, placed it on her son's heart and said to it: "If you really are what my son said, bring him to life again and I will worship you".

"If you consider it just as a book," the colporteur explained, "it has no more power than any other book in the world. Its power lies in what is written on the pages, and that power comes from faith alone. If you had paid more attention to what your son said – it appears that he found much joy in these things."

He did not finish his sentence, but George's mother exclaimed, "Yes, his joy, his happiness! He read no other book. And when he read his Bible, his looks were different. But I understood nothing about the matter, though he took great pains to teach me. I often was afraid that he would become mad. He would no longer go to the pub when coming home from his work; he would read his book, and he said that this was his relaxation from work. How kind he was, my poor George!"

The colporteur picked up the Bible. He opened it at John 11, which tells about Jesus coming to the family in Bethany who experienced such sadness after Lazarus died. He read three verses and commented that George must have read them, as they were underlined. He explained to her the meaning of Christ's words: "I am the resurrection and the life". He also explained Martha's answer: "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God". He then went on: "According to all appearances, your son was also a believer in these things, and this is the reason why he is not to be sought in this lower world, but in heaven, sitting at the right hand of his Saviour".

As the colporteur spoke, Mme Bardon stopped crying; she listened intently to what he said about the happiness that her son was now experiencing in heaven. The other people in the house also listened with great interest. The colporteur then prayed, and afterwards it was clear that the mother had received real comfort.

How far did the effect of God's Word go? We do not know, but it would be good to know that she went back to her son's Bible and read it carefully. It would be good too if she followed the colporteur's example and prayed – if she went on to seek the Lord Jesus in the light of what the Bible says about Him, and if she trusted in the Saviour for herself as her son had trusted in Him.

At the very least, this story shows the power of the Bible to help people even in the most difficult of circumstances. It can do so because it is God's

Word and because it therefore is truth. Yet let us never be content to have the Bible within reach without treating it as testimony from God about the way of salvation – testimony which we are to receive by faith. We are told: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

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## God Is the Only Soul-Mender

*C H Spurgeon*

Taken, with some further editing, from *The Young People's Magazine* for March 1970. The piece came originally from the book, *The King's Highway*. The kind of watch Spurgeon speaks of is, of course, the old-fashioned kind, driven by a spring, which drives a set of wheels that move the hands on the face of the watch.

**T**he soul is more precious than the body. We need a God that can save the soul. We all have many sins that must be pardoned. We have a conscience, something within us which troubles us and makes us feel uneasy because of sin. We need to have this conscience quietened and made peaceful. We have wicked hearts that must be made new and good, or we never can be happy. And we need a God who can do this for us.

Suppose I break the mainspring of my watch. It will not go. I try to mend it, but without success. I ask one of you to do it. You shake your head and say, I cannot do it. I take it to a shoemaker; he cannot do it either. I take it to a carpenter, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, a lawyer, a doctor, but none of them can mend it. After a while I take it to a watchmaker; he understands all about it. He puts in a new spring, and the watch goes as well as ever.

Now the soul is like a watch; sin has broken the mainspring; it will not go as it should; we need someone to mend it. We need a new heart, just as the watch needed a new mainspring; but the Soul-maker – the One who made the soul – is the only one who can do this. To try to get this done in any other way is like taking your broken watch for repair to a shoemaker or a blacksmith.

There was once a man in India, a heathen, who felt that he was a sinner. His conscience troubled him dreadfully about his sins, but he did not know how to get rid of them. He spent several years consulting the priests and visiting different temples in the hope of obtaining relief. He did all that he was told, but it did him no good.

At one temple he was told to take a long journey on his hands and knees. He did it but was no better. He washed in various fountains; he fasted till he was worn to a skeleton. He did many things, but none of them helped. At last he was told to put pebbles in his shoes and travel to a distant temple where, if he made an offering to an idol, he would be relieved. He did so, but in vain.

He returned home in sadness, with the pebbles still making every step a torture. Wearied with his journey, he halted one day in the shade of a grove where a group of people had gathered and were listening to a stranger. It was a missionary preaching the gospel. The heathen listened with great interest, for the missionary was preaching on the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin". He showed how Jesus is able and willing to save all who come to Him.

The heart of the heathen was drawn to Jesus. He took off his shoes and threw away the pebbles, exclaiming, "This is the Saviour I need. Thank God, I have found salvation."

The poor man had been carrying his broken soul to useless helpers. Like the shoemaker and the blacksmith with the watch, they could do nothing with it. At last he found the Soul-mender, and all was right. Jesus says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else". "Besides Me", He says also, "there is no Saviour." We need a God who can save.

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## Hard Choices

*Rev K M Watkins*

**D**uring his active days, Billy Graham became a well-known preacher all over the world. Sadly, he did not preach the gospel properly. He made it sound as if it was very easy for a sinner to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He would tell his hearers: "Choose Jesus! Make a decision for Christ!" He would tell them to come to the front of the meeting, to accept Jesus as their Saviour. He would make it sound so easy: "It is up to you. Just use your free will, decide for Jesus, and you will be born again".

Preachers like Billy Graham think that everyone has the ability to believe. Sinners just have to use their free will to make a decision for Christ. Such preachers do not believe that only the Holy Spirit can make sinners willing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. But is it easy to be saved? No, it is not easy. Jesus said that the way leading to eternal life is narrow and difficult, and very few people find it (see Matthew 7:14). According to the Bible, there are some very hard choices to make.

Choosing to become a Christian ought to be easy. It is a choice between life and death. The Lord says: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Who would choose death rather than life? Very few people want to die. Almost everyone wants to live. Salvation gives *eternal* life in heaven, instead of *eternal* death in hell.

Heaven or hell? It should not be hard to choose. But most people make the wrong choice. When the Lord saw that, He said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Why do so many people choose death instead of life, cursing instead of blessing, hell instead of heaven?

One reason is that choosing life requires the rejection of sin. You cannot have both sin and salvation. You must choose between them. If you keep hold of your sins, you will never lay hold on Christ to save you. You must repent, as well as believe. Joseph was told: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). When Jesus saves, He does not let people remain *in* their sins. He rescues them *from* their sins. Always. Every time. If you refuse to be saved in that way, you will never be saved at all.

But we do not want to leave our sins. We enjoy "the pleasures of sin" too much. We are like a man with a heavy bar of gold who has fallen into the deep sea. The weight is making him sink, but he refuses to let it go, even though he will drown and die. Sin is like that gold. Even though sin will drown us in the lake of everlasting fire, we cannot let it go.

Think of the alcoholic. The alcohol is killing him, but he cannot leave it. That choice is too hard. All sin is like that! We thirst for it. Man "drinketh iniquity like water" (Job 15:16). One person thirsts for the sins of impurity, another for riches, another for power, another for popularity.

The choice is clear. If you choose sin, you choose hell. If you choose salvation, you choose heaven. If you are determined to continue in even one sin, without repentance, it will stop you being saved. When Herod heard John the Baptist preaching, he did many things and left many sins. But there was one sin that he refused to leave. He had broken God's law by marrying his brother's wife. He refused to give her up. That choice was too hard. Therefore he could not be saved. By choosing one sin, he rejected salvation.

There is another hard choice. Sinners get right with God, not by their own works but through faith – not by doing, but by believing. "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16). It ought to be easy: simply trusting in Christ, instead of going to great efforts with our own works and religious duties. But denying our own works, and relying on Christ to do all the work of our salvation, is far from easy to our proud, self-sufficient hearts.

We like to be able to do things for ourselves, and keep things under our own control. We do not find it easy for someone else to do everything for us, and usually we refuse to let that happen. We do not want to be put in the

position of a little child, who can do nothing for himself. But this is exactly the choice we have to make. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). To be a Christian, we must humble ourselves like helpless children, looking to the Saviour to do everything for us. That is not easy.

This leads to another hard choice. Whose righteousness will we trust in? Our own, or Christ's? When the two men went to the temple (see Luke 18:9-14), one chose his own righteousness. It was the easy choice. That man, the Pharisee, looked at his own life and was very pleased with it. He thanked God that he was better than other men, because he fasted twice a week and gave tithes of everything. He was sure that his self-righteousness made him acceptable to God. He was wrong. Completely wrong. Tragically wrong.

The other man, the tax-collector, was ashamed of himself. That is why he would not look up. He was angry with himself. That is why he was beating his breast. He knew he had no righteousness of his own. That is why he stood far away. He knew that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). He prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner". He knew that God's mercy provided a perfect righteousness for sinners. He went home in a right state before God. He was accepted as a completely righteous person – all because of the righteousness of Christ.

This choice is not easy. We have to look at ourselves and what we have done, and condemn it *all*. But we do not want to admit that our hearts are really as bad as God says: "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). We do not want to accept that even our best works are full of sin. Jesus warned those who "trusted in themselves, that they were righteous" (Luke 18:9). He still does. The door of heaven will remain shut for ever if we try to open it with the key of our own righteousness. But it opens immediately when we use the key of Christ's righteousness.

Jesus says, "Come unto Me" (Matthew 11:28). He invites us to salvation. It sounds easy. But He also says: "No man *can* come to Me" (John 6:44). That sounds difficult. And so it is! We are not able to make the right choices. We love our sins too much. We want to do our own works. We want to trust in our own righteousness. It is so difficult. "Who then can be saved?" (Mark 10:26).

There is a way. "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). When we are born again by the Holy Spirit, the Lord changes us, so that we make the right choices. Then we leave our sins. We put our faith in Jesus, not in our own works. We deny our own righteousness, trusting that we are accepted with God only through the righteousness of Christ. Then we are saved!

It is only by God's almighty power that sinners choose to be saved. God says, "Choose life". Ask Him to work in your heart by His Holy Spirit, so that you will choose life and come to Christ for salvation. Some people, by grace, will make the right choices, however hard. For Christ was promised: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psalm 110:3).

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## Through the Alphabet with the Bible

Here are five verses from the Bible using the word:

### Y o u t h

For Thou art my hope, O Lord God: Thou art my trust from my *youth* (Ps 71:5).

**Precept.** Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy *youth* (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

**Promise.** Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with thee in the days of thy *youth*, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 16:60).

**Prayer.** Let not the errors of my *youth*, nor sins, remembered be:

In mercy, for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord, remember me

(Psalm 25:7).

**Encouragement.** Who with abundance of good things doth satisfy thy mouth; so that, even as the eagle's age, renewed is thy *youth*

(Psalm 103:5).

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### For Younger Readers

## The Honest Tailor

**M**r Burder was for some years a minister in the city of Coventry. In his church there was a man whose name was Ewbank, who was a tailor (someone who makes clothes).

Ewbank was one of the tailors who made cloaks for some men in the city. Perhaps the men were poor, or had important duties to carry out. (A cloak is like a coat, but without sleeves.)

Another man in the city arranged for the tailors to get the cloth they needed to make the cloaks. One year, he thought about the amount of cloth they were getting. They must be taking a lot more cloth than they need, he said to himself.



He decided that he had to find out what was happening. So he weighed the cloth before it was handed out. And he weighed the cloaks when they were finished.

What did he find? It was clear that there was a big difference. The tailors were stealing some of the cloth and using it to make clothes for other people. So these tailors were making extra money, but it was not honest.

Were all the tailors stealing? Almost all of them. There was just one tailor who was honest. He just took the amount of cloth that he really needed. And that was Ewbank.

Ewbank was honest; he knew that God sees all things. God knew exactly what he was doing. So Ewbank did not want to do what is wrong. And God knows exactly what we are doing. The Bible warns us: “Be sure your sin will find you out”.

But the real reason that Ewbank was honest was that he loved God. He always wanted to do what is right. God hates sin, and people who love God hate sin. Ewbank loved God, and so he hated doing what is wrong.

Because they got some extra cloth to use on other things, the other tailors made more money than Ewbank did. But that did not last; their sin found them out. After they were found out, the other tailors would no longer be making these cloaks. They would no longer earn any money in that way.

What about Ewbank? Everyone now knew that he was an honest man. So they knew that he was a good man to deal with. Those who bought the cloaks decided to get Ewbank to make all the cloaks they needed. He did not cheat, but in the end he was better off. It is always best to be honest.

And how relieved Mr Burder must have been to find out that the man from his church was shown to be honest!

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## Zimbabwe Youth Conference

*Rev S Khumalo*

**F**or the first time in the history of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Zimbabwe, a Youth Conference was held on 11 December 2014 in

Bulawayo at Lobengula Church. The Zimbabwe Presbytery had appointed Rev S Khumalo, Rev M Mloyi and Mr P Mzamo as a committee to organise and oversee the Youth Conference.

It was very encouraging to see a large number of young people attending the Conference. They came from most of our main stations: Mbumba, Zenka, Nkayi, Ingwenya, Bulawayo and Zvishavane. The total number who attended was 129. More could have come were it not for transport and financial constraints, and some were writing their end-of-year examinations at the various colleges. Yet the attendance was more than expected. Some of the young people who came did not belong to the F P Church and we hope they benefited doctrinally; we pray that the Lord Himself will bless the truth in their souls.

The papers presented during the Conference were as follows:

1. The work of the Holy Spirit – Rev S Khumalo.
2. Charismatic movements – Rev N Sibanda.
3. The use of the Psalms of David – Rev M Mloyi.
4. History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893-1905 – Rev A B Maclean.
5. History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Zimbabwe, 1905-2014 – Mr M A Mpofu.

After every paper, there were general discussions. These aroused great interest and many of those attending took part in them. Through the papers we desired to clear up the confusion which modern sects have brought into the teaching of the Word of God about the Holy Spirit and His work.

The second paper dealt with the charismatic movements and pointed out that they undermine the authority of Scripture in various aspects, including:

- Drawing people to some individual rather than God.
- Adding new revelations and many erroneous teachings.

Another important topic was the history of the Free Presbyterian Church. This also attracted a lot of interest. For some it was the first time that they were able to learn about Church history in a detailed way.

Because of the long distances some had to travel back to their homes, we had to finish early. The day was well spent and we pray for the Lord's blessing on this work among our young people, "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Mr P Mzamo made some remarks in conclusion. Then we sang Psalm 78 and a closing prayer followed. We are thankful to the Most High that everyone arrived at their homes safely.

## Zacchaeus

*John Newton*

Zaccheus climbed the tree,  
And thought himself unknown:  
But how surprised was he  
When Jesus called him down!  
The Lord beheld him, though concealed,  
And by a word His power revealed.

Wonder and joy at once  
Were painted in his face:  
“Does He my name pronounce,  
“And does He know my case?  
“Does Jesus want with me to dine?  
“Lord, I, with all I have, am Thine.”

Thus where the gospel’s preached,  
And sinners come to hear,  
The hearts of some are reached  
Before they are aware:  
The word directly speaks to them,  
And seems to point them out by name.

’Tis curiosity  
Oft brings them in the way,  
Only the man to see,  
And hear what he can say;  
But how the sinner starts to find  
The preacher knows his inmost mind!

His long-forgotten faults  
Are brought again in view,  
And all his secret thoughts  
Revealed in public too:  
Though compassed with a crowd about,  
The searching word has found him out.

While thus distressing pain  
And sorrow fills his heart,  
He hears a voice again  
That bids his fears depart:  
Then, like Zaccheus, he is blessed,  
And Jesus comes to be his guest.

# Looking Around Us

## Scotland's Changing

A little booklet dropped onto my doormat today. It was sent out by the UK Government and carried the title: "Scotland's Changing". It outlined proposed changes in the powers of the Scottish Government.

I do not mean to say anything about the Government proposals, but the title did make me think: Yes, Scotland has changed, and it is still changing – for the worse. It is true, of course, that there have been many changes for the better in the past 150 years. Most people, for instance, now have plenty to eat. And it is much easier to get around the country than it once was.

But far more important than anything else is the religious state of the Scottish people. How few now go to church! Of those who do go, how few hear the pure gospel – the good news that Christ Jesus, the Son of God, came into the world to save sinners like us. And how few believe the gospel!

And the level of church attendance is still changing – downwards. Fewer people are acknowledging God to the extent of going where ministers claim to be leading a congregation in the worship of God. At one time, children learned in school some of the teachings of the Bible. They were taught that the Bible is a revelation from God and that the Ten Commandments have God's authority. Now schools, even if they wanted to promote these ideas, would be afraid of atheist parents protesting that their children were upset by reading the Bible or hearing about the Commandments.

Scotland has changed into a society that is mostly godless; most people do not acknowledge God's authority; they may be very kind and pleasant, but they do not want to know that their duty is to love God with all their heart. So it is obviously a society that does not have His blessing. Yes, many people have plenty money and a lot of possessions. But are they happy? And, more seriously, will they be happy after the greatest change that takes place in anyone's life: passing into eternity?

What is the greatest change that Scotland needs? It is that people would pay attention to God and His revelation in Scripture, and that the Holy Spirit would apply its truths to their souls and turn them to God. If you have not so turned, seek salvation in Christ at once; remember that death may come when you do not expect it. If you have trusted in Christ, pray earnestly for others and for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the whole country where you live – and on the whole world.

**Price £1.00**