

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Volume 80

July 2015

Number 7

A New Stage in Life

Around this time of year, some readers will be moving on to a new stage in life. You may be starting work, or moving into higher education; you may just be beginning a new year in school or university or college, or moving on to a new job. All of these may provide opportunities to make new friends. They will probably bring fresh challenges. But they may also force you to face new, perhaps unexpected, temptations.

How do you expect to approach these opportunities and challenges? By working hard? With enthusiasm? And what about the temptations? Are you resolved to stand firm, relying on your moral strength and what your parents have taught you about right and wrong?

But none of these, good though they may be in themselves, take account of human weakness. Have you ever noticed the words in Proverbs 3:5: "Lean not unto thine own understanding"? Why not? Because we are sinners, and our minds are affected by sin. So we need God's help. He can restrain us from thinking in sinful and careless ways. Besides, we cannot see into the future, but God knows it all. So we should not be surprised that the other part of the verse reads: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart" – not half-heartedly; not just sometimes, but always. Yet we will not trust the Lord at all unless we are born again. And if we consider the dangers that face us in life, especially when entering a new stage in life, how earnestly we should pray that the Lord would give us a new heart (if He has not already done so)!

In Scripture we have many examples of people doing wrong when leaning on their own understanding. First, there was Eve; she clearly did not think aright when she gave in to Satan's temptation. At some point she began to lean on her own understanding. Had she gone on trusting in God with all her heart, she would have resisted the devil and she would have been safe. The next verse in Proverbs 3 reads: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths". If Eve had acknowledged God when Satan tempted her, God would have directed her thinking and she would have obeyed God in resisting these temptations. Adam too would have been kept from sin if he had trusted in the Lord when Eve gave him the forbidden fruit.

Now consider Saul of Tarsus. To his fellow-Pharisees he seemed a very good man, so blameless in keeping God's commandments and even the Pharisees' traditions which God had never commanded. But he was trusting in his own strength and in his own understanding; he was not trusting in the Lord for grace to live in obedience to Him. Saul needed to be taught, and God in His mercy did teach Him. He needed to be delivered from his self-righteousness, and the Holy Spirit did so. Only after meeting the risen Christ on the road to Damascus did Saul begin to acknowledge God from his heart and to confess his need of being directed in all his ways and in all his thinking, wherever he went.

When Peter was tempted to deny his Master, he was leaning on his own understanding. Jesus had warned him that Satan would tempt him. Peter was sure that he would stand firm: although all the other disciples might stumble into sin, he would not. Or so he foolishly thought. But how wrong he was! He should have trusted in the Lord with all his heart, distrusting his own thinking. It is very easy to criticise Peter and others who fell into sin through temptation, but unless we turn from our own understanding of things and trust in the Lord, we are just as likely to fall into sin. May the Lord keep us!

As our last example, let us consider the successful farmer that Jesus spoke about. No doubt a hard-working man, he had a wonderful harvest. He was going to pull down his barns and build bigger ones so that he could keep safely all the grain he had gathered in from his fields. He promised himself "many years" in which he could "eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19).

So Jesus described him as a fool; he was leaning to his own understanding; he was not trusting in the Lord; he was not acknowledging the Lord in any of his ways. He had no right to promise himself many years; in fact he was to die that very night. He had treasure on earth, but he had no treasure in heaven. We too should acknowledge that God has the right to take us away from this world whenever He sees fit. So we should seek Him "while He is to be found" (Isaiah 55:6). If we truly seek Him, we will find Him and we will trust in Him, and we will begin to acknowledge Him in all our ways. We will have His blessing, not only in heaven, but also in this life.

The farmer was acting as an idolater, making an idol of his possessions, and of his eating and drinking and being merry. Jonathan Ranken Anderson, a minister in Glasgow in the 1800s, put it like this: "To settle down . . . in the possession of any enjoyment, short of the eternal I Am, is sin; and the wages of sin is death". The I Am is Jehovah, (see Exodus 3:14), the One who is not dependent on any other being. If we settle down to enjoy any of the good things of this life while we ignore Him, we are making an idol of whatever we are enjoying, and that is sin. And every sin must be punished eternally

unless we look to Christ for forgiveness. This points to the greatness of God, our Creator, and the place He ought to have in our thinking – and indeed in the whole of our lives.

Alexander Mackay was a godly man who lived in Tongue, a village on the north coast of Scotland. He was once digging a piece of ground with another man; Alexander worked more quickly and soon got ahead. “You beat me”, said the other man when they had both reached the end (of one particular furrow, one assumes).

“If so,” Alexander replied, “I have paid dearly for it, for I was half an hour without a thought about my soul.” Here was a man with a tender conscience, who wished to think about God and his soul all the time. Yet others, even among those who have not completely given up on religion, would not be in the least concerned although they might never think about God or their soul from one Sabbath to another.

How does this relate to the opportunities and the challenges of moving on to a new stage in life? Think first about the opportunity of making new friends. You must do all in your power to maintain good relationships with those you meet at work or in your studies. It is another matter altogether to become close friends with those who are ungodly or opposed to true religion. There is a great danger of being led into serious sin and of being distracted from however much attention you may give to the needs of your soul. How can you think seriously about God and His claims if you are unnecessarily in the company of the ungodly?

Second, there are the challenges of the new situation: studying new subjects, or the same subject at a more difficult level, undertaking new duties or taking on new responsibilities. Most people will face these challenges in their own strength, or with the support, perhaps, of friends and family. All of these challenges are calls to pray to God for help and guidance. You should pray when you expect to begin a new course, for instance, or a new job; but you should also pray about the ordinary duties and responsibilities of each day. And you should pray repeatedly throughout the day – even if you just have time for a few words of prayer – to ask God to guide and protect you continuously, whether things go smoothly or otherwise.

Finally, whatever your situation in life, you cannot escape temptation. Again, you must pray; you must trust in the Lord. Ask Him to deliver you from Satan’s subtle attempts to drag you into sin.

Whatever your situation, you need God’s blessing. Always ask Him to bless you, to guide and protect you. But always remember Jesus’ words: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). And “trust in the Lord with all thine heart”, especially for your soul’s salvation.

Saving Faith

2. The Object of Faith: In Whom or What Are We to Trust?

Rev D W B Somerset

The first part of this Youth Conference paper, in last month's Magazine, dealt with the need for faith. Three reasons were given: (1) God is invisible; (2) by nature we lack faith; (3) we need it to escape the curse and inherit eternal life.

Several answers can be given to the question: In whom or what are we to trust? To put it another way: there are several objects in which we are to trust. But this is not because there are different sorts of saving faith; it is simply the same faith exercising itself in various different ways.

1. *The Word of God.* The first object of faith is the Word of God, or the Bible. We do not distinguish between these. The Word of God is not some vague teaching associated with the Bible which can never be identified, but it is the Bible itself – what is written there. So faith trusts the Bible, and particularly those statements and invitations and commands and promises in the Bible which speak of a way of salvation or a deliverance from hell. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

The important point about the Bible, as far as faith is concerned, is that it is objective. What this means is that it is something that exists in the world and continues to do so all the time; we did not write the Bible ourselves. Even if we were to concede all the difficulties which some scholars imagine (which we do not), we would still have these invitations and promises speaking to us. This objectivity is a matter of strength and comfort for the soul. We are called to believe in the Word of God. As the Psalmist says, even from the depths, “My hope is in His word” (Psalm 130:5).

2. *Christ.* The second object of faith is Christ. Faith trusts in Him as the One given by God to save sinners. It receives Christ and rests upon Him. “Come unto Me,” Christ says, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink” (John 7:37). Christ is able to save because He has died for sin, and faith believes this and looks to Christ for salvation. The sinner goes to Him, and makes himself known as one who is acknowledging his sin and his need of salvation. There must be personal dealings with Christ. “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21).

The important point here is that faith in Christ is personal. The same faith that trusts in the Bible trusts in Christ, but He is a living Person and there is much comfort in this. The Word of God is objective but it is not a living Person. Christ is in heaven, and the believer's sense of His presence may wax and wane, but when His presence is felt, there is a sense of immediate access to Him by faith that meets every time of need. When Stephen was being stoned and saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God", then it was to the Son of Man that he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:56,59).

3. *God Himself.* The third object of faith is God Himself. Christ's purpose is to "bring [sinners] to God". It is by Christ that they "believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1:21).

It was God that gave the Word, and to believe His Word is to believe Him. By believing His Word, sinners are setting to their "seal that God is true" (John 3:33). They are putting their "amen" to the Word of God. The Old Testament word for "faith" or "faithfulness" comes from the same root as *amen*. Equally, it is God that has given Christ, and has made the declaration concerning Christ: "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). And He has made this declaration concerning Him: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

But unbelievers have refused this declaration and so they are said to make God a liar, because they do not believe the record that God gave of His Son (1 John 5:10). This is the great sin of unbelief, and multitudes are going to perish for this sin.

4. *Christ's righteousness.* The fourth thing that might be described as an object of faith is the righteousness, or obedience, of Christ. This is what is held out to us in the gospel and this is what the believer receives and what he is going to wear in the eternal world and at the Day of Judgment – "for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Revelation 19:8). Paul's great concern was to be wearing this: "to be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).

Perhaps this is not exactly an object of faith in itself, but it comes in place of what used to be a false object of faith – namely, the sinner's own righteousness. But now he has cast that away and received this, and he is confident that this righteousness, or clothing, will be perfectly satisfactory. It is what God Himself has provided; so surely He will accept it when He comes to judge. Therefore the believer has "boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Ephesians 3:12).

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

7. In the Service of His Master to the End

Frank Daubney

Last month's article saw M'Cheyne and others travelling on a mission to Palestine. On his way back he heard that God was working powerfully in various places in Scotland, including Dundee, where he was a minister.

M'Cheyne preached earnestly about death and eternity but never concluded a sermon without directing his hearers to Christ Jesus, the only refuge for lost, ruined sinners. He was deeply anxious that there would be further fruit as a result of the revival. He earnestly desired that others would be brought in, yet he found many people stubborn in their unbelief.

In December 1842, he offered his congregation a calendar which, if they followed it, would mean that in a year they would read through the New Testament and Psalms twice, and the Old Testament once. He hoped that they should read through the whole Bible together and that, at any given time, they would all be reading the same portion. He said, "Above all, use the Word as a lamp to your feet, and a light to your path – your guide in perplexity, your armour in temptation, your food in times of faintness. Hear the constant cry of the Great Intercessor: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth'."

In addition to all his many pastoral duties at a time of revival he continued, when possible, to promote the cause of Christian missions among the Jews.

Church concerns. Another matter which concerned M'Cheyne deeply was the likely split in the Church of Scotland, which became known as the Disruption. In the General Assembly, the majority was at long last Evangelical and was determined that Christ should rule in His own Church. They were known as Non-Intrusionists and the doctrine of the spiritual independence of the Church was very dear to them. It grieved them that in case after case, patrons – those who paid the ministers – forced men onto congregations against the wishes of their members and the decisions of the local Presbytery. Judges of the civil courts, when disputes were referred to them, decided in favour of the patrons. Congregations and presbyteries were by law forced to accept ministers they disliked, distrusted and did not believe to be truly called by God.

There was never any doubt in M'Cheyne's mind as to the side on which the truth lay. He was a convinced and ardent Non-Intrusionist and was present in November 1842 at the Convocation in Edinburgh, along with 465 other Evangelical ministers who desired to preserve the independence of the Church. M'Cheyne did not live to see the Disruption but, had he lived, there is no

doubt that he would have walked with Thomas Chalmers, Andrew Bonar, Alexander Somerville and the others, on 18 May 1843, to the formation of the Church of Scotland Free.

M'Cheyne was a convinced Calvinist. This is clear from his many published sermons. His friends, the Bonar brothers, were Pre-millennialists, who believed Christ could return at any time to reign for 1000 years on the earth, but M'Cheyne was not convinced by their arguments.

Last days. On Tuesday, 14 March 1843, he performed the marriage of two of his young people but then felt unwell. And having told the story of the Good Shepherd to five or six children, he said, "I must go, I feel such a pressure on my brow". That story to the children was his last sermon.

Many people were suffering from typhus in the parish at this time, and M'Cheyne had never spared himself from visiting the sick. It was almost certain that he would catch it. Even when he was confused because of his illness, he remained faithful to his divine Master and to the souls who had been entrusted to his care. He was able to pray, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me". His congregation prayed for him continually, pleading with the Lord to spare him, but they would never hear his voice again.

On Saturday, March 25, he raised his hands as if to give a benediction and then let them fall. Alexander Smellie says that it was his way of going home. Robert M'Cheyne was not yet 30 years old when he finished his course. He had spent his all, lovingly and willingly, in the service of his Master.

The people of Dundee were stricken with grief. Andrew Bonar said that it was as if a sword had penetrated his own soul. "Never, never yet in all my life have I felt anything like this. It is a blow to myself, to his people, to the Church of Christ in Scotland."

A fellow minister in Dundee said, "Whether viewed as a son, a brother, a friend, or a pastor . . . he was the most faultless and attractive exhibition of the true Christian ever seen embodied in a living form. His great study was to be Christ-like. He was a man of remarkable singleness of heart. He lived but for one object: the glory of the Redeemer in connection with the salvation of immortal souls."

Conclusion. We have followed Robert Murray M'Cheyne from his birth in Edinburgh to his death in Dundee at the age of 29. At the start I asked the question, "Why do we still remember him and speak of him?" The world has no interest in humble, self-effacing men of God, but I hope I have shown that he was raised up by God to be a wonderfully-blessed ambassador for Christ and, in particular, that he clearly lived out the desire of his own prayer, "Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be". Is this not a man we

should ever remember with love, reverence and respect and whose example we should, through God's free grace, seek to follow? May Jehovah Tsidkenu be the Lord *our* righteousness, as well as Robert Murray M'Cheyne's.

For Junior Readers

Poor Joseph

Do you know what the word *gospel* means? It is *good news* or "good tidings", as the angel told the shepherds when Jesus was born. It is good news about salvation for lost sinners.

Can you think of any verse in the Bible that sums up this good news? Perhaps you have already learnt it by heart. If not, you could learn it now: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). As a godly man wrote, "Here we have the sum of the whole gospel, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is good news, and yet not too good to be true, for it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance."

Countless sinners, down through the centuries, have been thankful for this good news. One of them was called Joseph. He lived in London in the 1600s. He was a poor man who had not been to school. He made his living by walking along the streets of London taking messages or carrying heavy loads for other people.

One cold day he was walking down a street called Aldermanbury, not far from St Paul's Cathedral. As he plodded along with his load, he heard some Psalm-singing coming from a church. It was St Mary's, where the godly minister Edmund Calamy was taking a service. Poor Joseph thought he would slip in at the back and see what was going on.

The minister preached very clearly about the faithful saying in his text that day: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief". He assured the congregation that there is eternal salvation for the wickedest sinners – but only through the worthiness of Jesus Christ, the God that made all things.

Joseph never took his eyes off the preacher, but listened eagerly to every word he said. Trudging homeward after the service, he was heard saying to himself: "Joseph never heard this before: Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners like Joseph. And this is true, and it is a faithful saying."

Not long after this, Joseph became very ill. As he tossed about on his bed,

he kept repeating, "Joseph is the chief of sinners, but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and Joseph loves Him for this". When visitors called, he would tell them: "Joseph has nothing to say for himself but that he is the chief of sinners. Yet, seeing that it is a 'faithful saying' that Jesus, He who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, why may not Joseph, after all, be saved?"

When Calamy heard of Joseph's illness, he went to visit the sick man. Joseph was now very weak; he had not spoken for some time. But as soon as he heard the sound of the minister's voice, Joseph took him by his hand and exclaimed, "O, sir, you are the friend of the Lord Jesus whom I heard speak so well of Him. Joseph is the chief of sinners; but it is a 'faithful saying' that Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, and why not Joseph? O pray to that Jesus for me; pray that He may save me. Tell Him that Joseph thinks that he loves Him for coming into the world to save such sinners as Joseph."

The minister prayed. When he was finished, Joseph thanked him most sincerely. He then put his hand under his pillow and took out an old rag, in which he had tied up some coins. He gave them to the minister and said, "Joseph was saving up this for his old age, but Joseph will never see old age. Take it and divide it amongst the poor friends of the Lord Jesus, and tell them that Joseph gave it to them for His sake who came into the world to save sinners, of whom he is the chief." After saying this he passed away to be with the Saviour of sinners for ever.

You have been greatly blessed to have a Bible and you have heard the good news of the gospel many times. Will you not turn to the Saviour as Joseph did, believing that Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of sinners?

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

The Honest Shepherd Boy

Gerard was a German shepherd boy. He was very poor, but he was honest. You could trust him to do what he promised.

One day he was watching over his master's sheep while they were feeding near a forest. Suddenly a hunter came out from among the trees. "How far is it to the nearest village?" he asked.

"Six miles, sir," the boy told him, "but the road from here is only a sheep track". So it was very easy to wander off the track.

The hunter looked at the track. It was easy to see that Gerard was right. So he said, "My lad, I am very hungry and thirsty. I have lost those who were with me and I have missed my way. Leave your sheep and show me the road. I will pay you."

"I cannot leave my sheep, sir," Gerard answered. "They will stray into the woods, and may be eaten by wolves or stolen by robbers."

"Well, what of that?" asked the hunter. "They are not your sheep. The loss of one or more wouldn't be much to your master. And I will give you more than you have earned in a year."

The hunter would have thought that he was making a good offer. Gerard did not think like that. He wanted to do what is right; so he said, "I cannot go, sir. My master pays me for my time and he trusts me with his sheep. If I was to sell my time, which does not belong to me, and the sheep would get lost, it would be the same as if I had stolen them."

"Well," the hunter suggested, "trust your sheep with me while you go to the village and get some food and a guide. I will take care of them for you."

Gerard was still not happy. He shook his head and said, "The sheep do not know your voice, and . . .".

"And what?" the hunter asked. He was angry. He did not let Gerard finish. "Can't you trust me? Do I look like a dishonest man?"

"Sir," Gerard said, "You tried to make me break my promise to my master. How do I know that you would keep your word to me?"

The hunter now laughed, for he could see that Gerard was right. "I see, my boy," he said, "that you are faithful. I will not forget you. Show me the road and I will try to follow it myself."

Gerard was not only honest, but he was kind. He had a little food in his bag. He offered it to the hunter, who ate it gladly. He was so hungry. Now the hunter's servants appeared from the forest. Then Gerard was surprised to find out that the hunter was the Grand Duke who owned all the land round about where he lived.

The Grand Duke was not angry with Gerard any longer. The Grand Duke wanted to do something for him because he was so honest and faithful to his master.

Gerard's parents were too poor to send him to school. So the Grand Duke paid a school to take Gerard in so that he could learn.

It was right for Gerard to be honest, no matter what would happen afterwards. God tells us to be honest and not to tell lies or steal. God wanted Gerard to have a reward; so the Grand Duke paid for him to go to school. When we are honest, we may not always get a reward. But we should always be honest. God sees when we are not.

What the Bible Teaches on Holy Living

3. Love to God Leads to Obedience

Charles Hodge

This series is taken, with editing, from Hodge's book, *The Way of Life*. In last month's section, he emphasised that true religion – which is the principle of spiritual life – is not only outward service of God; it is also inward, and it produces all kinds of excellence in the individual.

The Scriptures make love to God specially prominent as the most important way in which this inward spiritual life can be seen. We are made in such a way that we delight in what suits our nature. One of the effects of the new birth is to make us able to recognise and love God's infinite perfection as what includes all kinds of excellence; it suits the highest powers of our nature. So, as soon as the heart is made new, it turns to God and rests in His excellence as what it most desires.

If we love God, we love a Person who is our Creator, Preserver and Ruler. Then He is also our Father, who with conscious love watches over us, protects us, supplies all our needs, holds communion with us, and reveals Himself to us as He does not do to the world. The feelings of dependence and duty very much enter into love to God. There is a sense of His infinite wisdom and power. We ought to admire these attributes of wisdom and power in God.

Because they are infinite in degree and united with infinite goodness, these attributes draw out that wonder, admiration and reverence which amount to adoration, and so we must bow down and worship. Nothing is more a part of religion than this reverence for God. Whenever anyone has had a view of heaven, its inhabitants have been seen with their faces veiled and bowing before the throne of God. And all acceptable worship on earth, proceeds from those who are humble, who sorrow for sin, who tremble at His word.

These feelings of reverence and love may be brief, as the thoughts of God pass again and again through the soul during the busy times of the day; or

they last longer, as when the soul comes away from the world and sets itself in the presence of God, to adore His excellence, to thank Him for His goodness and to pray for His blessing. The spirit of worship, which was specially obvious in the Redeemer, exists in all His people. They all walk with God; they all feel Him to be near and rejoice in His presence; and they all have communion with him in private and public worship. There is no true religion without this communion of the soul with God, as there is no life in the body without warmth and movement. And as the body rapidly decays when it is dead, so the soul perishes when it is not in communion with God.

This love of God will show itself in submission and obedience. If we submit, we humbly accept the will of God, recognising that God's commands concerning all things are right, and that they are all wise, merciful and just. Even when clouds and darkness are round about Him, true religion convinces us that "justice and judgement are the habitation of [His] throne". The renewed soul, filled with assurance of the wisdom, power and goodness of God, resigns itself into His hands, saying, "Thy will be done". When under the influence of this spirit, the soul is free from the discontent and hesitation which destroy the peace and increase the guilt of those who have no confidence that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

Love to God must produce obedience, because a believing soul loves what is true and right, for it loves God. Those who obey are showing outwardly that they have been given a new nature; just as disobedience is evidence that our will is contrary to the will of God. Wherever there is reconciliation to God, the heart and life must be conformed to His will. It is a contradiction to say that someone is like God, or is a partaker of His nature, if he does not love what God loves and avoid what He hates.

Obedience is just love in action. It is the way of life which love must take up. The love of God is not just love of what is excellent; it is the love of a heavenly Father. It secures obedience because it supposes a mind that works in the same way, if we may so speak, in the people of God and in God Himself. Love also secures obedience because it is His will that we should be obedient; obedience pleases Him. Love is no longer love if the one who loves does not want to give pleasure to the one who is loved.

"He that hath My commandments and keepeth them," said the Saviour, "he it is that loveth Me." Obedience is not so much the evidence of love, as it is love itself made visible. The usual course of someone's life shows the state of his heart much better than any occasional outburst of feeling, or any profession in words. So where someone's way of life does not reflect the will of God, his heart must be in opposition to that will. On the other hand, wherever there is love, there must be obedience.

The Swearing Captain

A woman was giving out Scriptures and tracts in Plymouth. One day she went on to a quay where a naval ship, with a crew of about 800, was berthed. She met the Captain of the ship and asked him for permission to go on board to distribute tracts to the sailors.

The Captain told her: "It will be no use; you will only meet with abuse". The woman still wanted to make the attempt; she told him she would go on board if he would give her permission.

Permission was given and she went aboard. Just then, something happened that annoyed the Captain and he swore. The woman said, "As you have granted me one favour, I hope you will grant another".

"Certainly", he answered.

"It is that you will please keep from swearing while I am in your ship."

The woman went on her way. The sailors she met were all respectful to her, and she was able to distribute some of her tracts. Very likely she had been praying that they would accept the tracts.

When she was ready to go back onto the quay, she found the Captain at the top of the gangway. She thanked him and then told him: "I have yet one more favour to ask".

"Yes, certainly."

The woman presented him with a New Testament and asked him to read it through twice. He agreed.

One Sabbath some years later, the woman was in a place about five miles from Plymouth. She went to a church and heard what she considered an excellent sermon. Afterwards, as she was walking away through the churchyard, a man spoke to her. He asked if she remembered giving a captain a New Testament, after distributing tracts on a naval ship and asking him to read the Testament twice.

Yes, she did remember.

He went on: "I am the man to whom you gave it, and I have been preaching to you today". God had blessed His Word to the Captain's soul. He added, "God has brought me to love that book which once I despised".

In this man's heart, there had been a change of attitude to the Bible. But more than this would have happened There would have been a complete change in his life since he started to read the New Testament. We can be sure that, in particular, he had stopped swearing. We can be sure too that he had not stopped reading when he finished the New Testament but had begun to read the rest of the Bible, where he would have found the Third Command-

ment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

Daniel's Determination not to Be Defiled

1. By Babylon's Pollutions

Rev K M Watkins

This is the first part of a revised version of a paper originally given at the Youth Conference in 1998.

Lessons can be drawn from anyone's life. The lives of ungodly people give us warnings of what to avoid. The lives of godly people give us examples to follow. Daniel's life was one of the greatest, and one of the best, that the world has ever seen. He is one of the great heroes of Scripture. Although his name does not appear in the Bible's "gallery of faith", in Hebrews 11, his actions certainly do: we read of those "who through faith . . . stopped the mouths of lions" (verse 33). For Daniel was cast into the den of lions and "no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God" (Daniel 6:23).

To understand Daniel's life and learn its lessons, we have to consider the times in which he lived. His testimony was bright – and all the brighter when set against the dark backdrop of the difficult days in which he lived. To live as Daniel did would have been a marvel at any time. To do it in the times in which he lived was more marvellous still. The historical context of Daniel's life is especially important to us, because his times and our times are so similar in many ways.

Along with other young men from Judah's nobility, Daniel was taken captive by mighty King Nebuchadnezzar and carried away to Babylon, at the end of the seventh century before Christ. Once there, no effort or expense was spared to drive away the influence of his Jewish background and make him a true Babylonian. He was to be fed with Babylon's food, educated in Babylon's learning, conformed to Babylon's principles, and converted to Babylon's religion. He was even renamed. Instead of *Daniel*, which reminded him of the true God, meaning "God is my judge", he was called *Belteshazzar*, after a Babylonian idol called Bel.

Those were Daniel's times. It could not have been easy to live on the Lord's side. Yet he did so. He lived all the remainder of his long life in pagan Babylon, a captive in a foreign land, far away from home, in circumstances most discouraging to godliness. Yet he continued faithful to the end.

It is remarkable how Daniel's life so many centuries ago can still speak

so clearly to us today. Modern western society is so pagan that there is a very real sense in which we live in a spiritual Babylon. Everything is calculated to drive us from God into the deathly embrace of the world. Strong temptations to sin press in on every side continually. In many ways, it is no easier for us to live on the Lord's side today than it was for Daniel. Yet we are to do so. If he lived godly in his times, by God's grace so should we in ours.

The Holy Spirit has left us a key to unlock the lessons of Daniel's life. It is in the first chapter and the eighth verse: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself". This purpose, wrought in his heart by the grace of God, explains Daniel's extraordinary life. When he arrived in Babylon he could not have been any more than 15 years old. Set against him were all the powers of that period's world empire, intent on defiling his soul and testimony. Yet from the outset he was determined not to be defiled by any Babylonian influence.

When we consider the forces of "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4) arrayed against us today, all conspiring to defile us, we may be ready to conclude that the battle is too strong for us, and that we will never be able to avoid being defiled. And so we are tempted to give in. But let us learn from Daniel. He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" – and so must we.

1. Daniel would not be defiled by Babylon's pollutions. Like us, Daniel lived in polluting times. It seems that it was before his arrival in Babylon that Daniel had come to a saving knowledge of the coming Messiah. Later in his life he would prophesy wonderfully about Him: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself" (9:26). In the fulness of time, God would send forth His Son to redeem His people, through the Anointed One (which is what *Messiah*, or *Christ*, means). Redemption would be accomplished through the sacrifice of the Messiah. He would be "cut off" in a violent death. And so it came to pass for the Lord Jesus Christ in His death on Calvary's cross.

The Messiah would not Himself deserve to die. He would not die on account of any sins of His own. It would "not [be] for Himself". Rather, it would be for His people, just as Isaiah had prophesied earlier: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). The Messiah's coming death as a substitute, in place of His sinful people, is what young Daniel had come to trust in for the forgiveness of his sins. And this, he would later prophesy, would be for the salvation of many. Messiah would "finish the transgression . . . make an

end of sins . . . make reconciliation for iniquity, and . . . bring in everlasting righteousness” (Daniel 9:24).

Through faith in the coming Messiah’s sacrifice, Daniel had truly “escaped the pollutions of the world” (2 Peter 2:20) and “the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). He was not going to allow Babylon to entangle him again. Having been washed in the sacrificial blood yet to be shed, he was not going to be like the washed sow returning to the mire. Having come to the fountain to be opened for sin and uncleanness, Daniel had no intention of returning to the filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

Daniel knew that pure and undefiled religion required him to “keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). So “he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” with Babylon’s pollutions. He was not going to allow his mind to dwell on polluted, unclean, sinful things. By grace, he was determined that his desires and affections would not fasten on anything that would defile him. In Babylon he had no choice but to dwell among a people of unclean lips and unclean lives. Although he had to live in that polluted atmosphere, he was not going to breathe it in to his soul.

Surely we cannot have failed to notice that our own times are especially polluting. Entertainment, literature, art, fashion, advertising, people, conversation – there is so much uncleanness among them. Especially in our cities we can hardly look around without some unclean thing presenting itself to our eyes. This unclean generation seems to glory in breaking the Seventh Commandment.

If we rightly learn this lesson from Daniel, we will be determined to say, “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Psalm 101:3). This is part of the “full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience” that is in every true believer’s repentance, as *The Shorter Catechism* defines it (Answer 87).

The Apostle Paul would write, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation” teaches “us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). Saving grace in Daniel taught him that lesson long before it was written by Paul. Surely, with these two witnessess, we should be of the same mind, and purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves with the pollutions of our day and generation.

Like Daniel in Babylon, we cannot help but see many polluting things. But like Daniel we must seek saving and sanctifying grace, to be determined not to focus on it with our hearts. A minister once illustrated repentance in an up-to-date way when he spoke of a young man walking along a city street saying within his soul, “I am not going to look at that”. To bring it even more up-to-date, we need to be determined to do the same with the many things that we can so easily bring up on our computer and smartphone screens!

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2014-15

Overseas Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Anne de Boer, Rita de Bruin, Bianca Jago. *Chesley:* Esther Schuit, Calvin Smith, Samuel Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Rachel Mack, Rebecca Mack, Sarah Mack. *Gisborne:* Finlay Cramp, Muriel Cramp, Annika van Dorp, Emma van Dorp. *Grafton:* Duncan Marshall, Keith Marshall, Ally van Dorp. *Mbuma:* Priviledge Bhebhe, Rebecca Mkwanzani, Sithabile Mphoko, Siphathisiwe Ndlovu. *Netherlands:* Gerben Bakker. *Singawombe:* Linile Maseko. *Tauranga:* Hannah Farfulla. *Zenka:* Nkomazana Pretty, Moyo Velani.

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Looking Around Us

Work, Leisure and the Soul

The Meek family were feeling the pressures of their working life, so they sold their house and now live in a touring caravan – for a year, at any rate. They know they have only a limited amount of time to enjoy the outdoor

world. So they do not want to spend too much of their time, every weekday, at work, with very little time to spend with their two daughters.

Yet we have a duty to work. “Six days”, God tells us, “shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Exodus 20:9). But we are not to give too much time to earning money. Tim Meek speaks of how, rather than people spending their money wisely, they may “abuse, waste or fritter [it] away”. But, above all, we are to make sure we have time to spend on our souls – time to pray, to read the Scriptures, to seek the Lord, to prepare for another world. And those who have children not only need to spend time with them as they play, for instance, but they also need to teach them about the things of God.

The Meeks found they were living for the weekends, when they could “head off together into local woods, climb hills, go on long walks and often sleep out under the stars”. But in all this, which can be very enjoyable, there seems to be no space left for the day God claims for Himself, which is a special opportunity to spend time on our souls and prepare for another world. God says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

Tim Meek commented on a life in which they felt their work took up too much time: “In our hearts and souls, it didn’t feel right – well not for us anyway. We kept asking ourselves: ‘Was this really what life was all about?’ The answer: ‘Surely not; it can’t be!’ . . . Somewhere along the way it dawns on you that . . . time seemingly becomes much more valuable with every day, month, year that ticks away.” There is some truth here – but one must also take eternity into account. What shall it profit us if we get an excellent work / leisure balance and then lose our soul?

The Meek family want to spend much more time exploring the world out of doors. From a young age, the girls have been encouraged to enjoy the outdoor world and they are perfectly at ease with the idea of falling asleep under the night sky marvelling at the Milky Way. But everything we see around us and above us should lead us to think of the One who created it, who is preserving it in existence and who will at last bring it to an end.

He is our Creator; so the most important matter for this world is to live to His glory. In our own power we cannot do so, but God has given the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of sinners like us. If we trust in Him as the One who died in the sinner’s place, then it will be possible for us to glorify God in this life and reach heaven when we die – when our limited allowance of time has come to an end. Exploring the outdoors can be good, but to follow Christ is even better (and both are possible). We must seek to serve Him while we are here and be ready to meet Him when life comes to an end.

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