

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Cover Picture: John Brown's manse in Haddington. The plaque beside the right-hand, ground-floor window indicates this. See page 210.

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Volume 80

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Number 11

When the Preacher Could Not Stop

For more information about R M M'Cheyne, the godly minister in Dundee who died in 1843 at the age of just 29, see the articles in this *Magazine* which began in December 2014. You might also read the excellent *Memoir* of M'Cheyne, written by his friend Andrew Bonar.

M'Cheyne paid a last visit to Bonar and his congregation at Collace, about 14 miles (22 km) from Dundee (though no one then realised that he would so soon be in heaven). M'Cheyne preached at the evening service – it may have been a communion season – and a large crowd had gathered to hear. The church was packed and others were standing outside.

“The folk were standing out to the gate,” a maid who worked in the Collace manse recalled, “and the windows were pulled down, that those outside might hear.” The maid had to leave the service early to go back to the manse, probably to prepare a meal. “I could see from the house the church lit up, and O I wearied sore for them to come home. They stayed at the church that night till 11. The folk couldn't give over listening, and Mr M'Cheyne couldn't give over preaching.”

What was happening? Why did the service last for so long? I do not know if there were conversions that evening or not, but it is obvious that the Holy Spirit was present. One need not be surprised that a holy, prayerful man like M'Cheyne could not stop preaching the truths of Scripture. Later, the maid wished she could again “hear Mr M'Cheyne at prayers in the morning. It was as if he would never give over; he had so much to ask.” Not only that, but he had faith to believe that God was able to do what he prayed for.

No one can now know what M'Cheyne prayed for that Sabbath in Collace, but he surely prayed for a blessing on the services that day. And other godly people would have been praying there too. Yet we can safely assume that, because their prayers were heard in heaven, at least some of God's people got good for their souls. They may have seen a little more than before of the sin of their hearts, their need to be made more holy, to look more firmly and more constantly to Jesus, their need for the Holy Spirit to go on working in their souls – and that God was able to do all this for them. Generally God's

work in preparing believers for heaven goes on stage by stage, year by year – though there are exceptions, such as the thief on the cross – until at last their souls “are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory” (*Shorter Catechism* 37).

As M'Cheyne preached that evening from these words in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “lest . . . I myself should be a castaway”, it is likely that many of the unconverted were made conscious of the danger they were in as sinners on their way to a lost eternity. Were all those converted who were impressed by the authority of M'Cheyne's preaching? Almost certainly not. Some may well have looked to Christ for the first time before the service ended, and others probably went home to seek the Lord and found Him sometime later. Still others, possibly many, would quickly have lost their sense of God's authority and of the sinfulness of their hearts and lives.

There is what is called a *common* work of the Holy Spirit. In it the Spirit works some degree of conviction of sin in people's hearts and restrains them from committing more serious sins. This work of the Spirit is *common* to those who will yet believe in Christ and to those who will lose their serious thoughts; it does not necessarily go on to conversion. But even the common work of God's Spirit is valuable; no one should despise it. Especially no one should trample on their convictions by, for instance, trying to focus their minds on worldly things, especially if these things are actually sinful: perhaps watching some ungodly programme on television or spending time on an evil internet site.

It was, no doubt, such convicting power of the Holy Spirit that made even unconverted people in the congregation that evening willing to listen to such a long sermon. M'Cheyne did not normally preach so long, and it would be most unwise for any preacher, in normal circumstances, to attempt to do so. But that evening, as the maid said, he could not stop; he had so much to say to the people; he was so anxious that they would not be lost, sent down to hell at last because of their sins. Not only would he have warned the people about their danger; he would also have set Christ before them as the Saviour whom God sent into the world so that sinners would not perish: “for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

That evening the people could not stop listening; they did not, it seems, become weary. Think about yourself: would you have become weary of the long sermon? For most people that would be natural, but that evening under M'Cheyne's preaching, it seems that people did not become weary – most of them at any rate. And that was because of the unusual power of the Holy Spirit which fell on the people.

If you easily get weary listening to a sermon, would you not just as easily become weary in heaven? Nothing happens there but what is spiritual. If you have no love for God and the things of God, you will not be able to enjoy in heaven the things that interest you in this world – whether they are in themselves sinful or otherwise.

It is unlikely that you have ever seen anything remotely like what happened that evening in Collace. But have you never felt some degree of power as you listened to the Word of God being preached? Did you never feel subdued in your soul as the preacher spoke about sin and guilt and eternal punishment? Were you never impressed with the fact that you are a sinner and that your sins will bring you down to hell, if you do not repent and believe the gospel?

Did you fight against these feelings? Or perhaps you just let your concerns ooze away? Then you were hardening your heart; you were resisting God's authority as He spoke through the truths of His Word in the preaching you were listening to. Whatever you may do in this life, see that you do not resist conviction of sin and the call of the gospel. Not only the preacher, but God Himself, is calling you in such words as these: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). See that you do not harden your heart against these things. If you do, it will need more power to be exerted on your soul another time if you are again to feel the seriousness of your sin and guilt before God and become willing to turn from your foolish, unbelieving ways and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen seriously to what M'Cheyne said in a sermon: "If Christ is now visiting your soul, do not trifle with Him. Some persons, when Christ begins to knock at the door of their heart, put Him off from [one] time to [another] time. They trifle with their convictions. They say, I am too young yet; let me taste a little more pleasure in the world; youth is the time for mirth; another time I will open the door. Some say, I am too busy; I have to provide for my family; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for Thee. Some say, I am strong and healthy; I hope I have many years to live; when sickness comes, then I will open the door. Consider that Christ may not come again. He is knocking now; let Him in. Another day He may pass by your door."

Time is short, and eternity is long. Already M'Cheyne has been 172 years in heaven, which is almost six times as long as he lived in this world. Surely you would be wise to turn your attention away from the pleasures of this life and seek earnestly to be prepared for the pleasures of heaven. Jesus said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24) – because they were not serious about their souls until it was too late. See that *you* will not be too late.

What the Bible Teaches on Holy Living

7. Union with Christ

Charles Hodge

This series is taken, with editing, from Hodge's book, *The Way of Life*. Last month's article asked the question: How do people become holy? It is not, the article explained, by following a set of rules, in our own strength; it is through the work of the Holy Spirit in those who believe and so are united to Christ.

The nature of the union between Christ and His people, on which so much depends, is truly mysterious. Paul says, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," and adds at once: "This is a great mystery" (Ephesians 5:32). So it is vain to try to bring this subject down to the level of our understanding. How God is present in the universe, and operates throughout it, is to us a secret we cannot penetrate. We cannot even understand how our own souls operate in our bodies. So we should not expect to understand how Christ dwells by His Spirit in the hearts of His people.

The fact that such a union exists is clearly revealed in the Bible. Something is said about its effects, and striking illustrations are used to show what it is, as far as that can be made known. Jesus prayed to the Father "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one (John 17:21,23). "He that keepeth [God's] commandments", says John, "dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24). And Paul says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you," the body may die, but the soul shall live (Romans 8:9,10).

The Scriptures are filled with this doctrine. The great promise of the Old Testament in connection with the Messiah's coming was that the Holy Spirit should then be given abundantly. Christ is said to have redeemed sinners in order that they might receive this promised Spirit. How did the Apostles recognise that someone had the benefits of redemption? The only evidence they would recognise is that the Holy Ghost had been given to them, either in the extraordinary powers of their time, or in the lovely fruits of holiness, which always mark His presence.

What does the Bible say about the effects of the union between Christ and His people? They benefit from the merits of Christ and are justified, and His Spirit dwells in them, so that they are sanctified. It is compared to the union between a representative and those for whom the representative acts. In this view Adam is said to be like Christ, and Christ is said to be the second Adam. Thus "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made

alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). The idea of union is also present whenever Christ is said to have died for His sheep, or in their place. Also they are said to have died with Him; so His death is treated as their death. It satisfies the demands of God’s justice instead of them, and it redeems them from the curse of the law.

This union is compared to the union between the head and the members of the same body. The point of this illustration is not only that Christ governs His people; the main idea is that there is a common life between them: the same Spirit dwells in Him and in them. The body is everywhere kept alive by one soul; so Christ, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, gives Him to all His people and makes them, in a sense, one with Himself and gives to them all that life which has its source in Him. “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12,13).

Christ uses another illustration with the same meaning. He says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing”. The branches are so united to the vine that they share in its life and are absolutely dependent on it; similarly believers are so united to Christ that they receive life from Him and are absolutely dependent on Him. The Holy Spirit, whom Christ gives to them, is the principle of life and fruitfulness in them.

Christ and His people are one. He is the foundation; they are the building. He is the vine, they are the branches. He is the head; they are the body. Because He lives, they shall live also. It is not they that live, but Christ that lives in them. They are called *spiritual*, because the Spirit of God dwells in them, while those who have not been born again are called *natural*, or *sensual*, “not having the Spirit”.

Believers are sanctified by the Spirit; they are led by the Spirit; they live in the Spirit; they are strengthened by the Spirit; they are filled with the Spirit. By the Spirit they mortify sin – they put it to death – through the Spirit; they pray and sing in the Spirit. The Spirit is to them a source of knowledge, of joy, of love, of longsuffering, of goodness, of faith, of meekness.

This doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to the gospel. It ceases to be the gospel if we remove from it the great truth that the Spirit of God, as the purchase and gift of Christ, is always present with His people. He guides their inward activities and outward behaviour and brings them at last, without spot or blemish, to the purity and blessedness of heaven.

The secret of holy living lies in the doctrine of the union of the believer

with Christ. This is not only the ground on which he hopes to be pardoned, but the source of strength for him to die to sin and live to righteousness. By being “rooted and grounded” in Christ, he is strengthened with might by the Spirit. Thus he is made able to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. It is this teaching which holds him up under all his trials, and makes him able to triumph over all his enemies, for it is not he that lives, but Christ that lives in him. So Christ gives him sufficient grace for each day, and purifies him to Himself, as one of His own people, who are zealous of good works.

John Brown of Haddington

4. Becoming a Minister

Last month's article described a difficult time in John's life. He had painfully learned languages such as Greek without much help from anyone; so he was accused of receiving help from the devil. John then left his home village of Abernethy to go about from house to house selling small items from his pack.

After spending some years as a packman, John became a schoolteacher, first in a village called Gairney Bridge. Although he had been a pupil in school for such a short time, he was well prepared, by the standards of his age, for the task before him – because of how much he had studied on his own. He was a much more successful teacher than he had been a packman. Children gathered to his school from a wide area. Just as John was an enthusiastic learner, so he seems to have been an enthusiastic teacher. Schooldays then included Saturdays; on that day the emphasis was on religious teaching.

Some pupils remembered John's instruction on Saturdays better than anything they heard on the other days of the week. He addressed the pupils earnestly, and a pupil called Adam Low remembered how these rousing addresses made him terrified because of his sin. He was so strongly convinced of the evil of sin that for many nights he could not sleep – until he got clearer views of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

While John was at Gairney Bridge, he was able to listen to the preaching of Ralph Erskine, but it meant walking over the hills to Dunfermline, 11 miles away. It was a wonderful opportunity, for this man was one of the best ministers of his time. John believed that Erskine's sermons were “brought home by the Spirit of God to his heart”.

Later John moved to Penicuik, near Edinburgh, where, he says, “I had a large school”. There he taught several young men who later became able,

useful ministers; their studies under Brown even included languages such as Latin.

John had himself long wanted to become a minister; he believed that God was calling him to preach the gospel. At last, at age 26, he applied to a meeting of the Presbytery in his area, the body of ministers and elders who had authority over the congregations in that district. In 1748 he went to the town of Falkirk to appear before the Presbytery. One member of Presbytery raised again the false rumours about John Brown. He accepted that John's education was quite sufficient to allow him to study for the ministry, but he understood, the Presbytery member said, that John had got his education from "his Satanic Majesty".

These long walks over the hills to listen to Ralph Erskine were clearly useful to his soul at the time, but Brown was further rewarded when Erskine stood up to answer the objections of the Presbytery member. "I think", said Erskine, "the lad has a sweet savour of Christ about him". He recognised that Brown spoke and acted as someone who "had been with Jesus", as the persecuting Jews put it when they recognised that the boldness of Peter and John pointed to Jesus' influence on them. After Erskine had spoken, nothing more was heard about John Brown being in league with Satan. Brown's godly, consistent life meant that these lies were clearly ridiculous. And he was accepted as a student for the ministry.

In Brown's Church, students spent only about three months studying during each year of their course. During the other months, the students were free to work; so Brown could carry on teaching and earn the money he would need year by year. No doubt students had to spend time during these nine months reading books that would be useful to them when they would become ministers.

For the first two years, he and other men studied with Ebenezer Erskine, a minister in Stirling. He was a brother of the minister who rescued Brown from the wicked rumours that were going around about him and who, at the meeting of presbytery, spoke about his godliness. But Ebenezer Erskine was becoming older and, after Brown's second year of study, he gave up his responsibility for training students. The work passed to Erskine's son-in-law, James Fisher, who was now a minister in Glasgow; this was where Brown spent his third session of study.

No doubt these three sessions of study – though they amounted to only nine months in total – were periods of hard work. Both of his teachers were able men with a solid understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. And it is clear that Brown learned well the subjects that occupied his mind during these nine months in Stirling and Glasgow. Then, in November 1750, at the

age of 28, he was “licensed” to preach the gospel. Now he could take services wherever he was asked to go, and he could now be called to become the minister of some congregation.

Brown did not treat this lightly; he examined himself thoroughly. He asked himself such questions as these: Had Christ given him the gifts he needed for the ministry? Had he a proper knowledge of the teachings of Scripture? Did he have the skill “to make the deep things of God plain” to those who had little or no education? As someone involved in matters of infinite importance, was he willing to go on studying the Bible and its teachings?

As someone who was to appear before the judgement seat of Christ, Brown also asked himself: Had he been called by God, “as was Aaron”? Was Christ really sending him, so that it was necessary for him to preach the gospel? Was Christ giving him a “tender compassion for the souls of men”, with a deep sense of his own unfitness and an earnest desire to be made holy and fit for Christ to use?

Two congregations invited John Brown to be their minister. He decided that Haddington, south-east of Edinburgh, was the place where God wanted him to be, and he was ordained as pastor of this congregation in Haddington in July 1751. This was the district where John Knox, the leading Scottish Reformer, was brought up – probably across the River Tyne from the main part of the town. Knox has not been altogether forgotten there; the local secondary school is still known as Knox Academy.

Many of the congregation lived outside the town; many of them worked on farms, growing crops and rearing animals. Others were involved in selling goods of various kinds to the people in Haddington and the surrounding villages. The congregation in Haddington had heard several men preach, so that they could decide which of these preachers would be most suitable as their minister. One godly old lady wanted Brown, for, she explained, “there’s a sweet savour of Christ about him”. It was very close to what Ralph Erskine had said of him.

How earnest we should be to know Christ for ourselves as the Saviour of sinners and to live godly lives! Perhaps then other people would recognise “a sweet savour of Christ” about us too.

Again, after Brown had settled in Haddington, he examined himself carefully. He knew that, if he was not converted – if he did not have the grace of God in his soul – it would be a terrible calamity. And if he was an ignorant messenger to his people, it would be a disaster. “Am I set here at the gate of heaven,” he asked himself, “as a candle, to waste myself in showing others the way, and lighting up the Bridegroom’s friends?” His fear was that, after

shining the light of Scripture on the way to heaven, and helping Christ's friends on their path to glory, his lamp would "in the end go out in obscure darkness" – he would end up in the blackness of a lost eternity.

Brown was concerned to be faithful to Christ and to His people; he knew that he must have a pure regard to God's honour; he must be wise, diligent, humble, zealous, spiritual and completely dependent on Jesus by faith. And, by God's grace, he was.

Daniel's Determination not to Be Defiled

4. By Babylon's Threats and Honours

Rev K M Watkins

This is the fourth part of an updated version of a paper originally given at the Young People's Conference in 1998. Daniel, one of the Israelite children carried away by King Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon, was determined not to be defiled by the sin of that place. In previous articles we have seen that he would not be defiled by Babylon's pollutions, pleasures, religion or education. Now we see that also he would not be defiled by its threats or its honours. If the world is not trying to frighten us with its frowns, it will try to attract us with its smiles, but all with the same purpose: to keep us from being faithful to the Lord. But "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8).

5. Daniel would not be defiled by Babylon's threats. Daniel was a young captive, and apparently powerless. Babylon on the other hand was great, strong and powerful. And Babylon was ready to persecute him if he did not conform. Daniel was required to eat the special food and wine that the King provided. Refusing it was not an option. The prince of the eunuchs was well aware of that. When Daniel told him that he was not going to partake of that provision, he knew immediately that he was in danger. The prince said, "I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink . . . then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king" (1:10). Young Daniel, though, was not going to be frightened by the threats of the king of Babylon. He feared a higher King, the Lord of glory.

Neither would Daniel be frightened later on in his life, when it came to declaring the Word of the Lord. When King Belshazzar saw the hand as it wrote on the wall, Daniel was not afraid to pronounce God's judgment on the King: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (5:27). He would not defile his soul by softening the Lord's message through fear of the King.

Some years after that, King Darius was tricked into signing a decree. The decree stated that whoever would ask a petition from anyone other than

the King would be thrown into a den of lions. “When Daniel knew that the writing was signed” (6:10), what would he do? Would he allow the threat of a violent death by wild beasts to stop him praying? Would his religious testimony be defiled by fear? No. “His windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (6:10). This is most precious – “as he did aforetime”! Daniel was not terrified. He would carry on just the same as before. Let the lions roar – he was not giving up prayer. No threat, however powerful and frightening, would force him to deny his God; he was not going to be defiled.

Neither should we allow fear to defile us. The world can threaten us in many ways. Some are afraid of others seeing that they serve God. Some are ashamed of the gospel because of what people would think of them and say about them. Some are frightened into hiding their religion. Some are afraid to speak the truth to others, fearing that they will not like it. Let us rather fear the God of heaven, and then we will not be terrified by the fear of man. When Daniel was brought out of the lions’ den, “no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God” (6:23). This is how he found strength of purpose to remain so firm in the face of such danger: he trusted in his God. It was through his faith that the lions’ mouths were shut. Like the psalmist, he could say, “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” (Psalm 118:6).

6. Daniel would not be defiled by Babylon’s honours. Daniel rose to high position in Babylon, from lowly captive to something like our prime minister. King Nebuchadnezzar “made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler of the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (2:48). He “sat in the gate of the king” (2:49). King Belshazzar “clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom” (5:29). Under King Darius, “Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes . . . and the King thought to set him over the whole realm” (6:3). And “Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (6:28).

It is a true saying that power corrupts – usually. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he was not going to be defiled by Babylon’s honours, just as he was not going to be defiled by its threats. He would not compromise his religion in order to keep or improve his position. To Belshazzar he was able to say, “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another” (5:17), so unaffected was he with these things.

Further, Daniel understood that really it was God who brought him into

these positions. From the beginning this had been so: “Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs” (1:9). Daniel was not going to dishonour the God who had honoured him, by allowing himself to court worldly honours at the expense of faithfulness to the Lord.

How we need to beware of the world! It can turn from threatening us as an enemy to charming us as a friend as quickly as can be. And its friendship is often more dangerous than its hatred. When it shows clearly how much it hates us, we are on our guard. But when it acts as if it is our friend, showering upon us honours and gifts, we can be so easily deceived, and begin to make friends with it. But such friendship is sure to defile us. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Like Daniel, let us understand that “promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75:6,7). Then we will not give our loyalty to the world, but to the God of providence. And, by God’s grace, we will purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves with the snares that come with getting on in the world

Heaven and Hell

1. Death and Its Consequences

Rev J B Jardine

This is the first section of a paper given at last year’s Youth Conference. The headings are taken from Thomas Boston’s book, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*. (Boston was a godly minister in the early 1700s in the south of Scotland.)

Intend to discuss heaven and hell – the eternal state – as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

1. Death itself. “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). This is a fact that we cannot deny. Whatever else people may doubt, they cannot doubt this. It is a decree of heaven; so it cannot be overturned or frustrated by anyone. Job spoke of death and the grave as absolutely certain: “I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living” (Job 30:23). This death is the result of sin. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Man consists of two distinct parts, a soul and a body. God made the body

of man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life; so “man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). Death brings about the end of the union between the soul and body. No one, not even the righteous, is exempt; they must all pass through “the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4).

The soul is distinct from the body and so it does not die with the body. The soul cannot be killed by any created power. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). The soul continues to exist without the body and still exercises its powers.

The doctrine that the souls of all return to God is confirmed in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: “The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them” (32:1).

At death the souls of both the righteous and the wicked remain conscious and active. But the soul of the righteous is blessed, while the soul of the wicked is kept under punishment, while he is being reserved for the Day of Judgement. This is proved by the experiences of the rich man and Lazarus, “And in hell [the rich man] lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, 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” (Luke 16:23-24). Lazarus is conscious and active in Abraham’s bosom, while the rich man is conscious and active in hell.

2. The difference between the righteous and the wicked in their death.

Death is a blessing to the righteous because of the promises in the covenant of grace; it is part of Christ’s legacy to them. “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours” (1 Corinthians 3:22). On the other hand, death to the wicked fulfils the threatenings of the covenant of works. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

So there is a huge difference between the death of the righteous and that of the wicked. For the righteous, death brings sin and sorrow to an end; it is the beginning of eternal life when they depart to be with Christ. Death to them is made powerless; it is without a sting. Death cannot hurt them; it becomes their friend. So death is a great benefit for the righteous. On the other hand, death for the wicked is the wages of their sin; it is part of the curse of the broken law and leads on to everlasting destruction.

Death is a token of God’s love to the righteous.

Death is a token of God's anger to the wicked.

Death for the righteous is a rest from their labour. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Death for the wicked is the greatest of all evils.

Death to the righteous brings their sin to an end and makes their sanctification perfect.

Death to the wicked marks the victory of sin over them and seals their spiritual captivity.

Death can never separate the righteous from Christ. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

Death to the wicked means a complete separation from Christ's favourable presence.

Death to the righteous is the beginning of heavenly glory.

Death to the wicked is the beginning of endless torments in hell. "It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:22-23).

The souls of the righteous are admitted into the blessedness of the heavenly state immediately after death. "The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies" (*Confession* 32:1).

Question 37 of *The Shorter Catechism* tells us about the righteous, that "their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection". Rest is one of the sweetest words in any language, and the rest of the righteous in their grave will be a sweet rest.

It is true for them "that all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). This statement covers all the events of their pilgrimage on earth and also their journey through the "valley of the shadow of death". They do not need to fear any evil, for the great Good Shepherd has promised to be with them and to comfort them with His rod and staff. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

A wonderful change occurs to make it possible for the souls of the righteous to enter into heaven. In heaven these souls are called "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23). They are completely freed from sin and "made perfect in holiness" (*Confession* 32:1).

But the souls of the wicked, as we see in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, are cast into hell at their death. "The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgement of the great day" (*Confession 32:1*).

There is no such place as purgatory, as some people claim. The Scriptures provide no evidence that there is such a place. "Beside these two places, heaven and hell, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none" (*Confession 32:1*). Indeed this doctrine, which is taught by the Church of Rome, is directly opposed to the teachings of Scripture; it is founded on anti-Christian principles. The very nature of purgatory would undermine the effectiveness of the atonement of Christ; it would point wrongly to the merits of temporary suffering, of the mass and of prayers for the dead.

These three Scripture verses plainly teach that there is no purgatory: "It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried" (Luke 16:22). "Jesus said unto [the believing thief on the cross], Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Everyone goes directly either to heaven or to hell.

For Junior Readers

What David Sandeman Found

David Sandeman was born in Perth, Scotland, in the 1820s. He was blessed with the same sort of privileges that many of you enjoy: he had godly parents; they took him to church from his childhood; they taught him the Word of God; they showed him from the Bible how he ought to live.

He did not go against what was expected of him in his Christian home. Indeed, as far as anyone else could see, his life seemed to be one of Christian obedience. Yet, looking back afterwards, David confessed that he was really a rebel, though outwardly obedient. He was a rebel against God. He was like the "whited sepulchres" that the Saviour spoke about, "which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness". He became conscious of the sins of his youth.

When he was about 16, David was very much impressed by a sermon he heard from the well-known minister, W C Burns. His text was from Job: "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom."

"I never knew till that night," David said afterwards, "what the Saviour

did for me.” But it was some time before he felt at all sure that he had been saved.

When he was 18, he was still concerned about his spiritual condition. This was especially so in view of the communion season that was soon to take place. But he was encouraged by thinking about Christ as One that is willing to receive sinners. He was then made able to call God his only hope. Soon after this he sat at the Lord’s Table for the first time.

Afterwards he wrote, “The blessed Jesus is all my righteousness”. That is what he needed. He was now like the Apostle Paul, who desired “to be found in Christ, 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”.

After he found Christ, David went on to study for the ministry. Then he went out to China as a missionary. His work there was short, as he died of cholera when he was only 32.

What about you? Perhaps you go to church, are obedient in outward things, know your Bible and learn your Catechism questions. But is that enough?

What did the Saviour say to the rich young ruler? Jesus told him: “One thing thou lackest”! Do not rest in anything that you can do; do not trust in your own obedience. But pray as the publican did: “God be merciful to me a sinner”.

Do not rest until you can say with David Sandeman, “The blessed Jesus is all my righteousness.”

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

The Knight Who Wanted to Fight God

A long, long time ago, knights would put on a suit of iron, almost like clothes, when going to fight another knight. There was one knight who said that there is no God. He was a very foolish man.

One day he wanted to see if he was right. He went out, in his armour, into a field. He threw his glove on the ground. This is what knights did when they wanted to fight with another knight.

He looked up to heaven and cried out, “If there is a God, I call Him to fight against me with His power and might”.

How very foolish! If God had fought against the knight, he would have been destroyed.

But God is good to people, even when they are foolish and sinful. The knight kept on looking up to heaven to see if there would be an answer. He saw a piece of paper being blown through the air above his head. It fell at his feet and he picked it up.

What did it say? Written on it were the words: "God is love". He knew that this was an answer to his call. God has control over everything and had made the wind blow this piece of paper to where the knight was standing.

The knight was now sorry for his sinful thinking – for not believing that there is a God. And he was sorry for all his other sins. He broke his sword and went down on his knees to pray to God.

The Book That Conquers

The clever, earnest, young Indian was very much opposed to Christian missionaries. When he met them in the streets he argued with them. He very much wanted to do everything that would make him successful in his arguments. But always he seemed to come off second best.

At last he decided he must read the Bible through, from beginning to end, to find out all the errors he assumed it must contain. He would then publish all the mistakes he found. He was bound to triumph over these missionaries – or so he thought!

But, as he read, he found it far more difficult than he expected to find mistakes in the Bible. He began to ask himself: "Am I right?"

The more he read, the more doubtful he became about his own religion. At last he was forced to say to himself: "No, I am wrong. I cannot conquer the book, but it has conquered me!" There are no mistakes in the Bible. It is difficult to fight against God, as others have found.

Clearly God was speaking to him through His Word. God was working by the Holy Spirit to shine light into his mind and heart. That was why he saw that his own religion was wrong and that the religion of the Bible is true, that his own gods were false and the God of the Bible really exists.

But it is not enough to believe that the teachings of the Bible are facts. We must trust in the God of the Bible for salvation from sin; we must trust in Jesus Christ, whom He sent into the world to save sinners. The Indian not only believed the teachings of the Bible; he trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation. And he became a Christian minister, preaching the gospel, which he had put so much effort into opposing. Such is God's power!

Scripture and Catechism Exercises

Overseas Prizes and Awards 2014-15

Senior Section

Prizes: *Connecticut:* Rebecca and Sarah Mack. *Zenka:* Velani Moyo.

Awards with merit: *Grafton:* Duncan Marshall. *Chesley:* Calvin Smith. *Mbuma:* Yolande Masina, Rebecca Mkwanzani. *Zenka:* Pretty Nkomazana.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Claudia Campbell. *Chesley:* Joel Bouman. *Grafton:* Rachel van Dorp.

Awards with merit: *Auckland:* Monique Jago. *Grafton:* Christina Kidd, Calum Marshall. *Mbuma:* Shanaz Masango, Sanelisiwe Masuku.

Awards: *Chesley:* Abigail and Josiah Smith. *Singapore:* Nehemiah Chai Yong.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Danielle Jago. *Chesley:* Joel Bouman, Peter Smith. *Gisborne:* Sarah van Dorp. *Grafton:* Hugh Marshall. *Mbuma:* Zibusiso Masuku, Sijabulisiwe and Isabel Ndlovu. *Zenka:* Pedina Mathenjwa.

Awards with merit: *Grafton:* Andrew White, Vashti Zuill. *Mbuma:* Zanele Masuku. *Simbo:* Barbara Mlotshwa, Nokuthaba Sibanda. *Singapore:* Owen Heyer Chai Yi. *Zenka:* Sikhangisiwe Queen Dube.

Awards: *Mbuma:* Nokukhanya and Sizalobuhle Gumpo, Simelinkosi Mpofo, Siduduzo Ndlovu.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Grafton:* Jared McAlpine, Ronnie Zuill. *Mbuma:* Reliance Lusinga, Innocent Masango, Busisa Ncube. *Singapore:* Naomi Ruth Chai Shi.

Awards with merit: *Auckland:* Rachel Campbell, Diana Jago. *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Mbuma:* Talence Bhebehe, Naomi Masuku, Nompikhelelo and Thobile Moyo, Michell Ndebele, Gracious Ndlovu, Gracious, Iminathi, Nokukhanya and Bygrace Sibanda. *Singawombe:* Europea Maseko, *Zenka:* Nathaniel P Ncube.

Awards: *Mbuma:* Beauty and Thando Gumpo, Mqondisi Mpofo, Saneliso Ngwenya, Buhlekenkosi Sibanda. *Simbo:* Sanele and Thobisile Mkhothamo, Simangele Moyo, Emeli Ncube. *Singawombe:* Thandeka Nyoni.

Lower Primary Section

Awards: *Auckland:* John and Peter Campbell, Bryce and Maria Jago, Aaron and Amelia Smith. *Chesley:* Isabel Bouman, Kara Zekveld. *Grafton:* William Marshall, Elijah, Eve and Mahala Zuill. *Mbuma:* Lubelihle Dube, Pheleliso and Sithembelenkosini Gumpo, Prosperus Masango, Trymore Mphoko, Mbongiseni and Palate Mpofo, Thabiso Ncube, Mphokuhle and Thembakile Ndlovu, Bulelwa Ngwenya, Abigail Nkomo, Silethubuhle and Sinomusa Sibanda, Sharon Sibindi, Silokuthaba Zikhali. *Zenka:* Hezel Ncube, Thembekile Sibanda.

Looking Around Us

Ready for Death?

A recent obituary of a woman mathematician described her as “exceptionally well organised”. She never missed a deadline, and all her lectures and conference papers “were prepared months ahead, never more than a few weeks after she had accepted a commission”. Her books and papers all reached the publisher well before the contract date.

She had known for a while before she died that she was terminally ill, but

the obituary does not tell us what preparation she had made for death. Doubtless her affairs were in perfect order as far as this world was concerned, but what of her affairs in the world to come? Was she ready to enter that world?

The question for us, though, is not about her but about ourselves. What of our affairs in the eternal world? Our lives here may be orderly or they may seem to lie in ruins, but if we have the saving knowledge of Christ then we are ready for eternity when our time comes. Without that knowledge we are utterly unprepared. "One thing is needful" (Luke 10:42).

(Rev) D W B Somerset

Pupils' Contracts

Pupils in Wishaw, in central Scotland, have been asked to sign contracts with their secondary school. First to be involved are fifth-year pupils who are studying maths. They are committing themselves, for instance, to handing in their homework on time, to take care of their jotters and textbooks, and to remember to bring such things as pencils to their classes. They are to promise: "I will work hard to try and achieve my target grade" in their exams.

It sounds like a good idea, if the pupils will keep to the contract. It provides teachers with a degree of pressure to apply to pupils if they fail to work hard or ignore some other part of the bargain.

Everyone – and that includes school pupils – ought to do all in their power to keep their promises. Sometimes it may be impossible to do so through no fault of their own; for instance, pupils might fail to reach their target grade because of long-term illness. On the other hand, people should not make a promise unless they mean to make a genuine effort to keep it. And they must keep up their intention, because they have made a commitment to someone else. God sees when the promise is made, and He sees when the promise is broken. He sees everything. And broken promises will be among the sins that people will have to give account for on the Day of judgement.

One hopes that these contracts will prove useful in improving pupils' success in their exams. But it might be more useful if schools would teach pupils the authority of the Bible, the commandments God has revealed in it, and everyone's responsibility before God, their Creator, to do what is right always. Then pupils might recognise their responsibility before God – as well as school staff and teachers – to work hard without having to sign a contract. And we would be wise, when we make a promise, to ask God to help us keep it.

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