

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



January 2016

Vol 81 • No 1

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Published by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Scottish charity number SC003545.

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Material for the magazine should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous month.

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; e-mail: wc.fpchurch@btconnect.com; tel: 0141 332 9283. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates, including postage, are: F P Magazine £26.00 (£2.00 per copy); Y P Magazine £15.00 (£1.00 per copy); both magazines £39.00. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

Free Presbyterian Magazine: The Church's main magazine is *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Send to the General Treasurer at the above address for a free sample copy. See above for subscription rates.

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Volume 81

January 2016

Number 5

“What Shall We Eat? . . . ”

How do you value things in life? What do you think of as most important? Perhaps your mind is focused on such questions as these: “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” (Matthew 6:31). And perhaps you ignore more important questions, such as: “What must I do to be saved?” or, How can I best live to God’s glory?

Food is God’s gift. We should express our thankfulness to God for our food by, for instance, saying grace. We should be very conscious that we do not deserve our food. We are to be specially thankful when it is nutritious and tastes nice. But we are not to live for our food, as if it was the most important thing in the world. We are not to overeat, or do anything else that is damaging to our health, however much we enjoy our food.

Again, when we eat the food we need for our bodies, we should remember that we also need food for our souls. We need to absorb the Word of God into our souls by reading it and by hearing it preached at public worship. We need to put a *right* value on everything, including food for our bodies and food for our souls. It is very easy to put too high a value on food for our bodies and to put far too little value on what would feed our souls.

Someone has said, “Valuations are made more accurately on the margin of eternity”; in other words, people are likely to value things better when they are on the edge of eternity, when they see death approaching – which will bring them into heaven or hell. They may then see the real value of the Bible, which they so long despised; they may see how useful it might be to read its pages and consider what they teach. They may value more highly the preaching of the gospel; they may wish that they had attended church more often and had listened more seriously. But they may now be too unwell to attend church; they may be too ill to read much of the Bible. How much better to put a high value on the Bible, and make good use of it *now*!

Similar things can be said about the value we put on what we drink. We certainly need to drink fluids, but we must be careful not to drink too much of some things. Many people will value sweet drinks too highly and put on too much weight; others will be irresponsible about alcohol and lose control

of what they think, say and do. Even to become slightly drunk is dangerous; for one thing, people will then fall into further sins much more easily.

Just as we need to drink for the good of our bodies, so our souls need to drink also. What wonderful water we will find if we put a proper value on the wells of salvation and go there to drink. What does that mean? Isaiah speaks of drinking with joy from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3); in other words, receiving the blessings of salvation from Christ, and doing so with joy – realising how valuable these are. Many people approach eternity and realise that they have always put far too little value on the wells of salvation – on the blessings of the gospel. Until then they thought that these were of no value, that there was no point in seeking Christ and salvation through Him – they assumed they would be far happier going on in their sins.

But when they came to the edge of eternity, they realised how valuable the salvation is that Christ has provided. How much better, and how much safer, to seek salvation early in life! How blessed to find Christ when you are young! Then you will never change your mind about Him; you will always put a high value on the infinite Son of God. And you will never change your mind about His salvation; you will always value highly His saving work at Calvary and the blessings that He has purchased for sinners like you.

The third question is about clothes. They are necessary, not only to keep us warm, but also to make us decent. Even in hot climates, people need to cover themselves sufficiently. But what value do people put on clothes? Who do they seek to please? Is it the world, or is it God? Are they more concerned to follow current fashions, or to follow scriptural principles – such as decency and a difference between male and female dress? If they place no value on scriptural principles, so that they feel free to follow the world, they may yet look back with sore hearts. When they approach eternity, they may put a very different value on such things, as they ask themselves: Why did I not live as I ought to have done? or, Why was I not more clearly on the side of Christ than on the side of the world?

Let us consider a fourth question: How do we value our leisure activities? What do we value most: worldly entertainment or spiritual profit? What is most attractive: is it listening to pop music, for instance, watching films, or time spent with ungodly friends? Or is it listening to a sermon describing the way of salvation, pointing to the glory of Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and calling us to flee from the wrath to come and lay hold on eternal life, or reading a book which gives the life story of some godly man or woman?

But think of how it will all look from the brink of eternity, if death stares you in the face at the end of a long life. Or you may suffer a bad accident, or you become unwell and doctors give you a serious diagnosis. What value

will you then put on your spare time? Will you look back uncomfortably at all the time you wasted watching television, searching the internet, chatting idly with friends and going to dancing and other worldly entertainments?

Not all these activities are *in themselves* sinful. Chatting with friends, for example, is not. The point is: Could your time have been put to better use? Certainly, if you look back when death comes worryingly close, will you put a much higher value on the opportunities you have wasted? Will you say to yourself: How I wish I had made better use of my time; how I wish I had used much of it to seek the Lord, go to church regularly, pray and read my Bible, and think seriously about the welfare of my soul and its eternal future!

Someone may read this who fears they have only a short time to live. Let me say to you on the basis of the Word of God: do not despair; you are still on mercy’s ground – in other words, you are still where God may show you mercy. It may soon be too late for you to have your sins cleansed away, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who took the sinner’s place and died instead. But it is not yet too late.

Be earnest about the salvation of your soul; make serious use of all the means of grace that are available to you – those channels through which God brings grace to sinners – such as reading the Bible, thinking over what you have read, prayer, family worship and, not least, listening prayerfully to the preaching of God’s Word. But do not put your trust in any means of grace, or in any effort you might make to find Christ. Look to Christ Himself. Trust in Him now, before it is too late – before you actually pass into eternity, where nothing can be done towards the salvation of your soul.

And if you recover from your illness or injuries, make sure you do not forget your serious thoughts. Be very thankful for God’s kindness to you, and especially if He has blessed your soul. But go on seeking the Lord – either for the beginnings of grace or for growth in grace. Too many people were serious when death seemed near and forgot all their serious thoughts when they recovered. How dangerous!

But perhaps you are in the best of health, and imagine that you have many years ahead of you. You might find yourself on the edge of eternity far sooner than you expect. Do not delay; put a proper, scriptural value on your soul. Seek salvation at once. Trust in Christ now. How many regrets this will prevent, not only at death, but in eternity also! And you will find that the rest of your life, spent trusting in Christ, will be by far the best part of it.

The most important questions are not: “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” Jesus gives perfect counsel: “Seek ye first [more than anything else] the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

The Three Robbers

Rev K M Watkins

For some weeks they had been creating great fear in the rural African neighbourhood. Not long after darkness fell, they would wait on some quiet path for an individual to come along. There were three of them, but the victim would not realise that to start with. Suddenly, the first robber would shine a bright torch into his eyes, dazzling him. Turning away from it, the victim would meet the large form of a second robber, who would seek to lay hold on him. If he managed to escape and flee in the opposite direction, he would find that he had run straight into the third of the group, waiting further down the path. Then all three would be upon him, robbing their victim of everything that he had.

They were armed, these robbers, and were not slow to use their heavy, farmers' knives on anyone who tried to resist. The local mission clinic was seeing the consequences. One night even the clinic's ambulance driver was attacked as he walked home after taking a patient to hospital. With the three in hot pursuit, he went from house to house pleading for help, but no one dared to open their doors. With serious wounds to his head and arm, he ended the night in hospital himself.

These three robbers made us think of the Saviour's Parable of the Good Samaritan, recorded in Luke 10, where the lone traveller going down from Jerusalem to Jericho "fell among thieves" (verse 30), who not only robbed him of all that he had, but also beat him so severely as to leave him "half dead".

Both of these, the account of the African robberies and Christ's parable, picture the wretched, fallen condition of sinners. Through sin, man has fallen among thieves, who rob him of all that he has and leave him "half dead". One part of him is alive – his body is physically alive. But the other part of him – his soul – is spiritually dead. That is how the Ephesians were before their conversion. They were physically alive, for they "walked" and had a life in the world, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind", but spiritually they were "dead in sins", "dead in trespasses and sins" (see Ephesians 2:1-5). This is what Paul means when he speaks of the woman who "liveth in pleasure" but "is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6). This is true of all who continue in unbelief.

In the African example, there were three robbers. The fallen condition of man leaves him helpless to the attacks of three spiritual robbers: the world, the flesh and the devil.

Like the first of the three thieves, the world dazzles the sinner's eyes with

its bright lights. The things of the world shine so brightly that the sinner is now blinded to the more important and urgent issues of the spiritual world. In this state, the sinner is unable to look at the things that are eternal; he can only see the things that are “temporal” – the things of the present time. He is taken up with the cares, pleasures and profits of this life.

Spiritually, the second thief is usually standing right next to the first. This is the devil, who is always going about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour sinners (see 1 Peter 5:8). This he does with his deceiving temptations, promising sinners great benefits from doing what he suggests. But when they obey him, instead of benefiting, they are robbed of the most valuable things.

This is what Satan did with our first parents. He promised Eve that her eyes would be opened and she would be wise. Working alongside the first robber, the world, he dazzled her with the loveliness of the fruit – it was pleasant to the eyes and good for food. But in doing what the devil said, our first parents were robbed of all that was most valuable – their righteousness, their estate of innocence, their communion with God and the promise of eternal life.

What of the third thief? As in the African example, he is the most hidden, and usually the last to be noticed. This is the flesh, by which is meant man’s own corrupt, sinful heart, with its desires and lusts. This is sin at work within a man’s own soul. It is the fallen man’s own character, which makes him a victim to his own wicked lusts, which rob him continually of all that is good and right.

The astonishing thing is that most sinners do not even realise that they are being robbed. As if in broad daylight, these three thieves steal from them all that is truly valuable. And they do not even realise it! Have your eyes been opened to see what is happening? Have you come to your senses, and have you seen what the world, the devil and the flesh have been doing? If so, you will be confessing with the Psalmist, “The bands of the wicked have robbed me” (Psalm 119:61).

This is part of what happened when the prodigal son “came to himself” (Luke 15:17). His sinful life in the far country, far from profiting him, had robbed him of everything that he had. That admission was involved in what he was going to tell his father. That is what you have to admit to God, who even now “looketh upon men” to see “if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not” (Job 33:27).

Back in Africa, the ambulance driver went running from house to house, crying for help, but no one dared to open their doors. It was similar to Christ’s Parable of the Good Samaritan. To begin with, no one would help the man fallen among thieves.

The priest passed by on the other side (see Luke 10:31). The priest, whose calling was to be busy in the elaborate service of the temple, represented organised religion. He passed by, without helping. This teaches the sinner who has fallen among spiritual thieves that he should not look to outward religious performances to restore what he has lost. In and of themselves, diligent use of the means of grace – attending church, reading the Bible, praying – leave the sinner still dead in his sins. These activities cannot restore what he has lost to the world, the devil and the flesh.

The Levite passed by on the other side too (see Luke 10:32). The Levite, along with temple responsibilities in support of the priests, was also a teacher of the law (see Nehemiah 8:7-8). Therefore he represented God's commandments. He also passed by, without helping. This teaches the sinner that he cannot regain his spiritual possessions by trying to obey the law. However hard he tries, he will always fail. The three robbers will not give up what they have taken away, when pursued only by these vain attempts of their victim. This is what the Apostle Paul taught: "A man is not justified by the works of the law . . . by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). However hard a sinner tries to do what God's commandments require, he will never get right with God in that way. He will continue spiritually dead.

Did the man in the parable perish then? No, he did not. Just as the ambulance driver did not perish. Eventually the driver got back to the clinic, where emergency first aid was given and he was himself driven to hospital, where surgery was performed. In the parable, after the priest and Levite, a third traveller came along the road. This was a Samaritan, from whom a Jew could least expect help. For the Jews and the Samaritans were enemies and had no dealings with one another (see John 4:9).

But this Samaritan was different. Seeing the man half dead at the roadside, he did not heartlessly pass by on the other side, but instead was moved with compassion at what he saw (see Luke 10:33). He "bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (verse 34). What a difference!

The Good Samaritan pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as a Jew would not think of a Samaritan coming to his rescue, so a dead sinner is slow to think of Christ coming to his aid. But "Christ Jesus came into the world" for that very purpose – "to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). He came to save sinners dead in sins, robbed by the world and by the devil and by the flesh. This is how He speaks of His work: "I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm 69:4). He paid the price Himself for all the sins of His people, by giving His life as a sacrifice to God.

It is usual for half-dead sinners to be slow to think of Christ coming to help them. They are quicker to turn to religious performances and their own attempts to keep the law. But actually it is only Christ who can help the spiritually dead. Only He can bind up the wounds inflicted by the three robbers. Only He has the “oil and wine” of gospel remedies for poor robbed sinners. Only the gospel can bring sinners to a place of safety and refuge. Only Christ can take care of souls. Therefore call on the name of the Lord to save you from the three robbers!

John Brown of Haddington

5. Preacher of the Gospel

The last article appeared in November. In it we saw John Brown become a minister in Haddington, a small town near Edinburgh.

Brown began his ministry in Haddington in 1751. What did a week’s work involve? In the winter months, from November to February, public worship on a Sabbath began at 11 am. There was a lecture (like a sermon, but the emphasis was on expounding a passage of Scripture); then there was a sermon – together with prayers, singing and Bible readings. Later in the day, there was what was called an “evening exercise”. In the other months of the year, when daylight was longer, there was time for an extra service with a sermon.

On the first Monday of every month, the minister met with some of the elders and deacons for a prayer meeting, which included some spiritual conversation. There was no such meeting in September; it was the harvest month, when those who were growing crops would have to spend a great deal of time reaping the harvest and gathering it in.

Every year he visited each family in the congregation. There were also separate visits to each district in the congregation. Brown would announce from the pulpit that on an evening during the next week he would come to some district to examine the people there about their religious knowledge. If it was to take place in Haddington, they would gather in the church; if it was in some village, they might gather in someone’s house. There would be first a brief act of worship; then the minister would ask someone a question from *The Shorter Catechism*: perhaps, “What is effectual calling?” or, “What is repentance unto life?” He would then ask further questions of his own to help bring out the meaning of the *Shorter Catechism* answer. Besides all this, Brown would make extra visits to those who were sick and to old people who could no longer come to church.

There was a man belonging to the congregation in Haddington who was not prepared to join with the other people in their “call” to John Brown to be their minister. A few months after Brown had settled down in Haddington, the man wanted to explain why he had held back. Perhaps it was when the minister paid his first visit. “I have nothing against you,” the man told him, but he claimed that Brown was too young and lacking in experience for the work. “That is what I think myself, David,” Brown answered humbly, “but it would never do for the like of you and me to go in the face of [against] the whole congregation.” It would seem that one reason Brown believed it was God’s will for him to come to the church in Haddington was that so many of them were united in calling him; so David, he was suggesting, should also have fallen in with their wish.

Brown married his first wife in 1753. She was Janet Thomson, a godly woman, the daughter of a merchant in nearby Musselburgh. When Bonnie Prince Charlie was leading his troops southwards during his attempt in 1745 to become king of Great Britain, one of his soldiers went into Janet’s father’s shop and demanded his money. John Thompson refused. The soldier drew his sword and asked, “Don’t you know your life is in my hands?”

“I’m not so sure of that,” the shopkeeper replied; “my life is in God’s hands.” And God did preserve Thomson’s life; he suffered no harm whatever. An officer heard shouting in the shop and entered. He arrested the soldier, and John Thompson was safe. Janet and her husband had eight children, but only two of them, both boys, survived. One was called John and the other Ebenezer; both became ministers. This younger John Brown was better known than his brother and became a minister in the town of Whitburn, over 20 miles west of Edinburgh.

David Hume was a well-known thinker and writer of that time, but he did not believe the Bible. One day he heard two ministers preach. Later Hume told his friends: “The first preacher spoke as if he did not believe what he said; the latter [preached] as if he were conscious that the Son of God stood at his elbow”. This first minister was concerned to make his sermon sound attractive to educated people, but ordinary people would have found it difficult to understand. The second minister was John Brown; what he was concerned about was that everyone would know what he meant. He was not interested in being praised by the important people of his age, but he really did want his hearers to be able to follow what he said as he explained the great truths of Scripture, especially about sin and salvation.

It would be good if all preachers were conscious of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as they spoke; then they would always want to proclaim the teachings of the Bible and to do so in such a way that people would grasp

what they are saying. Only then can they expect their hearers to receive the truths that will keep them from eternal death and bring them to eternal life in heaven at last.

Janet Brown died in 1771. Sometime later, John Brown married Violet Croumbie. They had a son William, who described his father as a very plain, faithful, serious and earnest preacher. John Brown liked what James Ussher, a minister of the previous century, had said: “It will take all our learning to make things plain”.

Brown certainly had a full share of learning – though he was largely self-taught, but he used it to make his preaching plain – easier for his congregation to understand. He did not want his people to go away and say, What a clever man! But he would have been very happy if people, after hearing him preach, went away saying, What a glorious Saviour! While probably very few people today have heard about the first preacher, whoever he was, many have valued John Brown and his writings, even centuries after he died. The fact is: “the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance” (Psalm 112:6).

Heaven and Hell

3. The General Judgement

Rev J B Jardine

The previous section of this Youth Conference paper was in last month's *Magazine*. It spoke about the resurrection.

There is an individual judgement that everyone undergoes immediately after death. There is also a general judgement that will take place at the last day, “because [God] hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Judgement here means pronouncing and executing the final sentence of clearing or condemning the person being judged. All will be called to this judgement by the voice of Christ, the ministry of the angels and the shout and trumpet of the archangel, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Yet the exact time of the last judgement is hidden in the eternal purpose of God. No man or angel knows when it will take place. Not even Christ, in His human nature in this world, knew when it would take place. In this way we are being taught that we should always be ready for it. “Behold, I come

as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).

"God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgement is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil" (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 33:1).

It is certain that there will be a final judgement. Robert Shaw, in his *Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith*, gives five proofs:

1. Our own conscience testifies that there will be a judgement. Men by nature know the difference between good and evil. Their conscience either approves or condemns their conduct and speaks to them of future punishment for their bad behaviour. "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15).

2. Human reason works out that there will be a judgement. If there is a God ruling in providence, then there will be an appointed day in which He will judge between those that serve Him and those that do not.

3. There will be a general judgement, "for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

4. The Scriptures confirm that there will be a judgement: Solomon says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Job says, "Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgement" (Job 19:29). The Psalmist says, "Before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity" (Psalm 98:9). And Paul says, "We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

5. The resurrection of Christ confirms it. The resurrection of Christ is a pledge or token of the general resurrection and judgement of all men. "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

*For Junior Readers***Ewen Cameron**

Have you ever come across the verse in the Bible which tells us that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world . . . and the weak things of the world . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence”? Ewen Cameron who lived in the Highlands of Scotland long ago was one of those men – he was not even able to read and write and had little of the things of this world. But, much more importantly, he was saved by the grace of God. Indeed he was such a fine Christian man that the godly people of these days regarded him very highly.

After he was converted some of his friends tried to teach him the letters of the alphabet, but he found it impossible to learn. But he had such a love to the Word of God, and the Lord so helped his memory, that he soon knew much of the Bible by heart. In fact, if he was staying in someone else’s house, they might ask him to take family worship; then he would do so holding a Bible in his hand, but repeating the Psalm and a whole chapter from memory!

He was also a very prayerful man and had some wonderful answers to prayer over the years. He once went to stay with a godly man over a communion season. The people at that time were very poor and the family only had potatoes and salt to eat, but nothing to eat with them. So Ewen went down to a quiet place near a river to pray. He specially prayed that the Lord would send them something which they could eat along with their potatoes. When he got up from his knees, he found a large salmon on the ground near the edge of the river. He lifted it up, carried it back to the house and placed it on the kitchen table. Was that not a wonderful answer to prayer? And there was enough salmon to last the family over all the days of the communion!

The Lord’s people were very kind to him and for the last few years of his life, he lived with a family on the west coast of Scotland. On his last day on earth, he asked them to take him outside so that he could see the world once more. They explained to him that he was too weak to walk and that the only way it would be possible would be to carry the bed outside with him in it. He asked if they would do that for him and they kindly did so.

As they propped him up on his pillows, he looked at the beautiful view of the sea and the mountains for a little while. Then he said, “Is not the world which God created beautiful? But what is best about it for me is that I found Christ in it!” He asked them then to carry him inside and thanked them for

all their kindness to him. That night Ewen passed away to be with the Saviour he had found in this world.

What about you at the beginning of this new year? Do you love the Bible like Ewen did? You can read it for yourself; so it is easier for you to learn parts of it by heart than it was for him!

And what about prayer? Do you love to pray as he did? Remember that you can pray about anything at all, but especially you should pray for the salvation of your soul. Pray that you would find Christ, as Ewen did, before the day comes when you too will have to leave this world behind. Then it will be too late to seek the Lord.

J van Kralingen

Better Treasure

James Dillon lived in Ireland. On the first morning of January, he was leaning on his farmyard gate when a Mr Hilton, not long back from America, came walking briskly towards him. They greeted each other warmly and wished each other a happy new year. James added his wish that “the beginning [be] good, the middle better, and the end best of all”.

Hilton spoke about the blessing of studying God's Word, with prayer for the Holy Spirit's help to understand it properly. Then, assuming the prayer was answered, “we shall then get to love Him so well that whatever happens we must be satisfied with it, because we are told that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God’ (Romans 8:28). And so we shall become more and more happy throughout the year; and even should it end in death, who can doubt that in this case the end would be best of all?”

Dillon answered slowly and very seriously: “You are right, quite right, and it is myself that knows that”.

Hilton was very glad to hear his friend's words. They did not use to agree on religion. Dillon invited him in to what he called his “poor place”. It used to be a comfortable farmhouse, but now it was very run down.

“Tell me how you and your family are getting on”, Hilton asked. Then he added with a smile: “I fear you have not yet found the hidden treasure”.

“I have found it. Praise be to God!” But Dillon was referring to a different and better treasure.

Hilton asked, “Is it possible? Where? Who told you where it was?”

“Your own self, Mr Hilton, and no one else.”

Hilton was puzzled.

So Dillon explained: “Don't you remember that, often and often, when you used to be laughing at me because I was night and day breaking my

heart looking for the pot of gold that my father buried somewhere in here in the old times, you would say to me: ‘Dillon, look at that Bible. Believe me, there is a treasure in that book so precious that, if you once find it, you would not give it up for all the gold that we hear of in California or Australia, especially when you are about to die, and the riches of this world – if you had them – would be no good to you.’ I did not seem to heed your words much at that time, but they stuck in my heart for all that. And I could never stop thinking what should I do if I was about to die and no treasure laid up for me above. Well, I began to search for it as you told me, and I found it.”

“What did you find?”

“My Saviour – pardon for all my sins, through Him that loved me and gave Himself for me, and a promise of everlasting life.”

“God be thanked!” Hilton exclaimed. He was so glad for the change God had brought about in his friend, and that God had blessed what he had told James.

After some more conversation, Hilton said, “You have, I trust, found the one ‘pearl of great price’, and now tell me, do you still pine after the gold which your father was supposed to have buried?”

“Well, I do not pine or fret about it as I used to do . . . and I will tell you why: I should have spent it all and not be one bit the better for it.”

“That is highly probable, James. How do you think you would have spent it?”

“When I was young, I intended, whenever I got it, to buy a horse to go to fairs and races at every place where there was any sport. And as I grew old I decided that I would enjoy it quietly and take my ease and have no work or trouble of any sort.”

“Then, my friend, it was great mercy in God to keep it from you. In either case you would have had bad habits.” Now that God had been pleased to bring Dillon to a knowledge of His love to him in the sacrifice of His Son, Hilton hoped that he would show his thankfulness by serving God actively, “which I trust you will henceforth do as a good steward ‘of the manifold grace of God’” (1 Peter 4:10).

But Dillon wondered what a “poor ignorant man” like him could do.

He was, his friend told him, to let his conduct always be such as would recommend religion to others. He quoted the Apostle Paul: “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Philippians 1:27). Also, Hilton said, “do what good you can to your fellow creatures and you will not be thought an unprofitable servant. . . . You say you no longer fret about the gold; but tell me, do you still wish to get it?”

“I am not sure about that.” Then he put on his glasses, took down a New

Testament from a shelf and opened it. "I am afraid to wish for money", he said, "since I read these words: 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare' (1 Timothy 6:9). But if it pleased God to send it and to keep it from being a snare, I should be very glad, for we need it badly."

Hilton was sorry to hear James speak like this and wondered if anything had gone wrong while he had been away from home.

"Nothing very new; it is a common story all over poor Ireland of late years." Then James explained that they had so little money that they could no longer afford to work the farm. His son Dennis was just then getting ready to go to the landlord and ask him to take the farm off their hands in March. The young ones were going to America; and James had no idea where he would live until his family would send for him to follow them across the Atlantic. "And so, you see, it is not a good beginning for the new year."

Hilton said that he hoped that the Dillons would not have to leave their home. He said, "I have just learned that, having discovered you were only a stranger and pilgrim on earth, you seek a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called your God: for He hath prepared for you a city" (see Hebrews 11:14,16).

"That's beautiful! Please mark the place where it is in this Testament, for I think it will be a comfort to me often." And James read the verses to his three children who had just appeared in the room. Dennis and Mary looked fine and healthy but Grace, the younger daughter, was clearly unwell. The father hoped that "the air of that new country will soon cure her". Perhaps he was not really as hopeful as his words suggested, but he added, "I have one good hope about her; I think she is seeking that 'better country' that we were reading about".

Hilton tried to encourage Grace by quoting the Saviour's words: "Seek, and ye shall find". Then he asked James: "Have you given up all hope of finding the money said to be hidden here? And had you any really good reason for supposing that it was ever here?"

"I had. You know I was brought up a Protestant, but very little I or those that brought me up knew about religion. . . . When my father was dying, he called us all to his bedside and gave us his blessing. 'James,' says he to me, 'I have two things to say to you: first, never part with the old clock.'" And James asked Hilton to take care of it when they would all go away.

James went on: "He then said, 'in the year '98, when we had troublesome times, I had a trifle of money saved and I hid it'. No one knew where it was except the father, his wife and a friend, John Malone, and they had sworn never to tell anyone until the father died. James was always anxious to find out where he should look for the gold. His mother always refused to tell him,

even when she was dying. All she would say was: “Never part with the old clock, James”. His father’s friend moved to another part of the country, and James travelled a long distance to see him, only to find that he and his family had moved to America.

The clock was no longer working but Hilton went over to it, opened it up and picked up the weights. He looked at them closely and asked Dennis to bring some tools. The weights were old-fashioned for the time: small tin cans filled with, perhaps, sand. He opened one of them up and in it was the long-lost gold. Hilton knew what he was doing in opening up the weights, for on his recent visit to America he had met John Malone, who told him the secret, now that he knew that old Mrs Dillon had died.

Now the family could stay on in Ireland; there was no need to emigrate. What was James’ reaction? Of course, he was glad to have a lot more money. But he asked Hilton: “Pray for us that this may not be ‘a snare’, but that I may use it to His glory who gave it. And then, if the beginning is good, the middle will be better, at the end will surely be best of all.” God, in His kind providence, had kept the gold hidden until James, now converted, was able to use it more wisely. How good if we were all able to commit the whole of our lives to God, asking Him to care for us – especially for our souls!

For Younger Readers

The Thankful Fisherman

One dark night, several fishing boats were out at sea. It seems the men did not expect a storm. But suddenly a storm came; the sea was very rough.

The boats were now on their way to the harbour. The wives and children watched with concern from their windows. They were asking themselves: Were the boats coming in that were carrying their husbands and fathers?

Then something serious happened. At midnight one of the fishermen’s houses went on fire. It was all destroyed.

Yet how glad everyone must have been in the morning! They could see all the boats safely at anchor in the bay.

The woman who lost her house went down to tell her husband what had happened. When she told him, he gave a surprising answer: “Wife, I thank God for the burning of the house”.

Why did he speak like that? Because it was by the light of the flames that they saw where to go in the darkness of the night. If there was no light, they would all have been swept onto rocks, perhaps, and been drowned.

Even on difficult days, there is always something to thank God for.

How Matthew Helped His Grandmother

The woman lived on a mission station in South Africa. The missionary in that district believed she was a true Christian. She understood the gospel clearly and was anxious to speak about Christ to heathen people who lived near her.

But she had a serious problem: a violent temper. She knew it was a sin and she used to pray about it. And God answered her prayer. But how?

One day another woman annoyed her and she lashed out with her tongue against this other woman. That evening the woman who had problems with anger heard that the other woman had been speaking about her. So she became angry again; she said that she could not sleep until she had given the other woman another row.

Her grandson Matthew heard which she said. He attended the mission school and he knew that his grandmother (he called her Mamma) was wrong to be so angry and to speak as she did. He asked her if it was right for someone who went to the Lord's table to be so angry.

Matthew's question went to the woman's heart. She could no longer be angry. So she went quietly to bed.

She said later: "In the morning my little Matthew asked me, 'How has Mamma slept? Mamma was going to keep awake all night.'"

"Be quiet, my son," the grandmother said, "it is enough." It seems that she was no longer angry but was anxious to go away alone to confess sin to God.

"I went," the woman continued, "ashamed of myself, to a secret place and, bending my knees before God, I sought pardon through the Redeemer. Instead now of looking for the other woman, to scold her again, I asked our school teacher to see her and to speak with her. She did so, and the end was: the woman came and asked my forgiveness. I then read to her from the Bible about the love of God, and the love we should have to each other. She was so much affected that she threw her arms about my neck and said I was her best friend and that she would, in future, always listen to my advice."

There were probably faults on both sides, as is so often the case. We too should ask God to keep us from speaking in an angry way and ask Him also to pardon all our sins.

But what about little Matthew? Soon afterwards he became ill. It was difficult for the missionary to speak to him because he became deaf. At last Matthew could hear nothing, but he was always patient. He often told the missionary that he did not want to get better; he was happy in the hope of soon being with the Saviour. After almost a year, Matthew's wish was granted. How good for those who are ready to go home to heaven to be with Jesus!

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2015-16

Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Aberdeen:* Rachel Somerset. *Barnoldswick:* James Ross. *Edinburgh:* Mairi Campbell. *Glasgow:* Jonathan Norris. *Kyle:* Sarah Whear. *Snizort:* Sarah Macleod. *Tonbridge:* James and Katie Playfoot. *Trowbridge:* Abigail and Daniel Broome.

Intermediate Section: *Barnoldswick:* Christopher Metcalfe. *Cheadle:* Henry Johnson. *Dingwall:* Hannah Mackenzie, Laura Macleod, Matthew Ross. *Edinburgh:* Anna Campbell, Bradley Morrison. *Gairloch:* Roddie Wyatt. *Glasgow:* Jessica Norris. *Guildford:* Susanna Risbridger. *Inverness:* Jessica Maton. *Llanelli:* Angerad Cran. *London:* Henry Munns. *Snizort:* Jonathan Macleod. *Stornoway:* Jamie Doig. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot.

Junior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Claudia Van Essen, Robert Metcalfe. *Beaulieu:* Deborah Maclean. *Brighton:* Katherine Hills. *Dingwall:* Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Ross Campbell, Fraser Morrison. *Gairloch:* Josh and Kyrene Tallach. *Glasgow:* Hugh Macpherson, Rebecca Smith, Grant MacLennan, Louise Norris. *Kyle:* Mark Whear. *Llanelli:* Abigail Cran. *London:* David and John Munns. *North Harris:* Hannah Jardine, Neil Morrison. *North Tolsta:* Ruth Morrison. *Portree:* Hannah Macrauld. **Upper Primary Section:** *Barnoldswick:* Calvin Middleton. *Dingwall:* Lydia Ross. *Edinburgh:* Esther Campbell. *Glasgow:* Susie Macpherson, Cameron Ross. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh. *Llanelli:* Jonathan Cran. *London:* Sarah Munns. *Ness:* Angus and Rachel Murray. *North Harris:* Ruairidh Morrison. *North Tolsta:* Angus Morrison. *North Uist:* Mairi MacDonald. *Snizort:* Andrew Macleod. *Stornoway:* Joshua Morrison. *Tain:* Abigail Reynolds. *Trowbridge:* Samuel Broome.

Lower Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Julia Macleod. *Barnoldswick:* Isaac, Jael and Ruth Fisher, Kathryn and Timothy Metcalfe, Bethan Middleton, Daniel and Sam van Essen, Madison Westlake. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell, Thomas Ross. *Edinburgh:* Anna Cameron-Mackintosh, Fraser Campbell, Jenna and Susanna Campbell. *Glasgow:* Elena MacLennan, Paul Macpherson, Calvin and David Norris, Hugh and Shona Ross. *Halkirk:* Donald and Grace Maclean. *Inverness:* Callum Arie Morrison. *Llanelli:* Carys and Carwyn Cran. *London:* Habakkuk and Manow Fox. *Ness:* Emily Murray. *North Tolsta:* Uilleam Morrison. *Portree:* Catriona Macrauld. *Stornoway:* Cameron and Faith Mackay, Levi Morrison, Emma, Naomi and Owen Morrison. *Tain:* Benjamin and Clement Reynolds.

Looking Around Us

When Warnings Are Rejected

When Leonie was young, she was diagnosed with diabetes, which caused her blood sugar level to become too high. So she had to be careful about what she ate and to take injections of insulin.

Then in her teens, she rebelled against these restrictions. For some years, this did not seem to be a problem. But in the end, during her 20s, her carelessness caught up with her. She began to have problems with her eyes and, within a year, she lost her sight completely. She admits that it was largely her own fault, but her blindness cannot be reversed. It is too late to do anything about it now – except to take care of herself, to avoid further damage to her body.

Is there not also a warning here for another and even more important area? What about your soul? We all have a major problem with our souls. It is the

disease of sin. Every individual in every successive generation suffers from it. It has infected us through and through.

And we are warned, time and again, about the problem and about its consequences. The Bible gives such warnings as these: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4); it will die eternally unless that person repents and believes the gospel. So “he that believeth not the Son [of God] shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36); if he does not believe, the wrath of God will follow him all through his life – whether he is conscious of it or not – and will follow him into eternity. And preachers, if they are faithful to their Master, will repeat these warnings.

But too many people rebel against the warnings; they want to continue with a sinful lifestyle. Too many people reject religion altogether or, if their conscience will not allow them to go so far, they do not want to become really serious about religion; they do not want it to distract them from their sinful pleasures. So they go on in their sins in spite of all the warnings they have read in the Bible and all the warnings they may have heard from the pulpit and from their parents.

But the warnings are true. People neglect them at their peril. How terrible it will be for them to die and awaken in a lost eternity, with all its fearful sufferings. They will have to acknowledge that it is all their own fault, and no doubt that will be part of the awfulness of their situation. Besides, there is no possibility of change; they cannot now find forgiveness; there is now no opportunity for repentance. In hell they may ask themselves repeatedly: What if . . . ? What if I had listened to the warnings I was given? What if I had turned from sin when its consequences were pointed out to me? What if I had sought the Lord when He might be found?

You have been warned once more. The matter is serious. It is urgent. There may be no time to spare. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6,7).

2016 Youth Conference

This year's Youth Conference will be held, God willing, at Netherurd House, Blyth Bridge, West Linton, Peebleshire, EH46 7AQ, from Tuesday, April 5, to Thursday, April 7. Further details are to appear in next month's *Young People's Magazine*.

Price £1.00