

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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



***March 2017***

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**Cover Picture:** The church in Ettrick. See page 52.

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# The Young People's Magazine

Volume 82

March 2017

Number 3

## Bartimaeus and His Garment

Jesus was on His way out of Jericho. His disciples and a large crowd of people were following Him. A blind man, called Bartimaeus, was sitting at the roadside. He probably wondered why so many people were coming along the road. Then he heard someone say that “it was Jesus of Nazareth”. He knew at once that Jesus was the One that was working miracles on many people who were sick and suffered from various disabilities. He recognised Him too as the Messiah whom God was to send into the world to save sinners. Bartimaeus had found Someone who was perfectly suited to helping him in his need.

He started to cry out, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me”. He did not speak in a little whisper; he cried out. It was something tremendously important that he needed – to be able to see. The people tried to quieten him, because they did not want Jesus to be disturbed, but Bartimaeus cried out all the more to Him.

Clearly Jesus welcomed the cries of Bartimaeus; He did not feel disturbed by them. Rather He wanted to do good to those who were in need. So He stopped and commanded someone to call Bartimaeus to Him. Did Bartimaeus delay? Of course not. The matter was far too important to allow even the smallest delay; it was altogether too urgent. Bartimaeus even threw away his garment in case it would get in his way. No doubt he was often glad to have that garment, especially perhaps when a cold wind was blowing. But that day, the most important thing was to get to Jesus as soon as possible, and he would let nothing hinder him.

Jesus was not only very willing to heal people's bodies; He was also very ready to heal their souls. He still is. And we should be just as earnest about coming to Christ for the salvation of our souls as Bartimaeus was for his eyesight, and just as determined to let absolutely nothing stand in our way. Jesus gave Bartimaeus his eyesight; so also He will save those who seek Him.

Think of your life and your outlook on spiritual things. Perhaps you realise that sin is serious and that you need to be delivered from its guilt and its power before you pass from this world. Perhaps you know that it is only Jesus Christ

who can so deliver you. Yet you do not come to Him; in other words, you do not trust in Him. Perhaps you are allowing various things to get in your way and hinder you from coming to Christ.

When someone suggests to you that something is a hindrance, you may ask, What is wrong with it? Indeed, there may be nothing wrong with it except that it stands in the way of you coming to Christ. Perhaps it is because it takes up too much of your time that it hinders you from seeking the Lord.

Certainly, if you are studying, you need to spend a proper amount of time on your work, but it is possible to spend so much time on it that you do not have time for the things of your soul. Again if you are working for an employer, you may be so focused on getting promotion or a larger pay packet that you leave no time to seek salvation.

Or you may spend most of your free time on sport. Now it is important, for your health, to get exercise. But you may make an idol of the sport that you most enjoy, so that it occupies your thoughts most of the time when you are not concentrating on your studies or on your work, for instance – even on Sabbaths. And watching professional sport occupies a great deal of time that could be much more profitably used for other activities.

God has given us time, and He would have us use it for His glory, as well as for our own spiritual good. So Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). He is telling us what our priorities should be: we should give the first place to spiritual things; we should especially give time to finding the kingdom of God and the righteousness that He gives to those who enter His kingdom.

People may say that this leaves them no time to do other important things. But that is not true, because Christ promises that, if we give Him the first place in our lives, He will give us everything else that we need, such as food and clothes, which were among the other matters He had just mentioned. Yet it is unlikely that you have no time to spend on your soul; indeed some of you may often ask yourselves: What can I do with my time?

The real problem probably is that you do not like spiritual things; you wish to spend your time on other things, even if they cause damage to your soul. This is where we should remember Bartimaeus: he really wanted to be able to see. He was willing to throw away a piece of clothing so that he could go to Jesus as quickly as possible; he wanted nothing to hinder him. So we should be willing to give up anything that hinders us from seeking the salvation of our souls; we should be willing to deny ourselves things that we enjoy so that we would be sure of finding Christ.

Yet it should be obvious that, if something is our duty, we must do it. For

instance, if you are responsible for helping someone who is sick, you must do what they need. But perhaps, while you carry out this duty, you can send up petitions to God. You may ask Him to bless your soul, forgive your sins, make you holy, open the eyes of your soul so that you can see Jesus – in other words, so that you may believe in Him.

We must certainly give up what is actually sinful, no matter how much we may enjoy it. Jonathan Scott was a minister in England. One day, after hearing him preach, some ladies came to speak to him. One of them asked him: “Do you remember dancing with us?” and she mentioned the place where it happened.

Scott answered, “O yes, I remember it well, and I am much ashamed of those days of my vanity”. Dancing was something he had cast away, not only because it stood in the way of coming to Christ and having communion with Him, but because it was wrong. He went on: “You and I are many years older now, and so much nearer death and eternity”. He was clear that, because there was now much less time left before death, they ought to be all the more earnest and urgent about the salvation of their souls – so much the more earnest and urgent about seeking Christ.

We too should be earnest and urgent about coming to Christ, whatever our age. We should remember Bartimaeus and be all the more willing to put away everything in our lives that stands in the way of coming to Christ for salvation. For instance, we should think of the company we keep. Are these people a help to our souls? If they are not a help, they will be a hindrance to us. At work, in school, or in college, for example, we have no control over those we meet; but we do have control over those we make our best friends.

If you do put away whatever hinders your spiritual welfare, you will never regret it. Think of the blessings that Christ gives to those who put away whatever hinders them from coming to Him and who actually trust in Him. He will be with them at every step on their way through life; He will supply all their needs; and in the end He will bring them safely to heaven, where they will enjoy His presence for ever.

Jonathan Scott had put away those activities that were harmful to his soul. He was not sorry that he had done so. He experienced God’s blessing throughout the rest of his life, and when he came to die, he said, “O tell poor sinners what a sweet and precious Christ I have found, or rather that has found me”. How blessed he now is in heaven, as is everyone else who came to Christ before they died. They certainly do not regret giving up anything for the sake of Christ. Always remember Bartimaeus; do not let anything stand between you and Christ. Seek Christ earnestly and urgently. Trust in Him, as the One whom God has given to be the Saviour of the world.

## Love for the Lamb

*Rev K M Watkins*

Some of the mission team were heading back to the United Kingdom. Their term of service in Africa had come to an end. Those remaining, along with the local staff at the mission, were determined to mark the event with a farewell meal, with presents of appreciation to be given afterwards.

A couple of days before the event, two goats appeared on the mission compound. Left free to wander and graze where they wished, they were safe within the mission's walls. Two of the mission ladies befriended them. Clearly, the goats were used to human contact and were very friendly. The ladies' affection for the goats quickly increased. They were becoming very attached.

But the goats had been brought to the compound for a reason. They were intended for the cooking pot. Goat was a favourite, but rare, treat for the local people. The goats were going to be slaughtered, to provide meat for the farewell meal. The day before, both ladies began to feel uncomfortable and upset. They had a restless night, distressed about the goats.

Early in the morning, one of the ladies went hastily to the mission canteen, hoping to buy the goats herself, to save them from going into the pot. It would not be difficult to find "unknown" goats as substitutes. But she was too late! The goats had already been killed.

The two ladies attended the farewell meal but were unable to eat the goat meat. They could not erase from their minds the pleasant time they had enjoyed with "their" goats. I hope you can use your imagination and understand a little of what they were feeling.

More importantly, try to imagine the feelings of a firstborn son among the Israelites at the time of the first passover. You remember the story. The Children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. God sent Moses to tell Pharaoh, the King of the Egyptians, to let the Israelites go free. But Pharaoh kept hardening his heart, refusing to let the people go, even when God warned him by sending nine plagues upon Egypt.

So there was to be a tenth and final plague, the most terrible of all. At midnight, on the fourteenth day of the month, the Lord would kill every firstborn son among the Egyptians. "All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts" (Exodus 11:5).

On the tenth day of the month, every head of a family among the Israelites

was to select a lamb or a kid, a male just one year old. It had to be faultless – without any injuries, defects or blemishes. He had to keep it separate until the fourteenth day. Then, in the evening, he was to kill it and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts of the house. God promised that, when the destroyer went through the land to kill the firstborn of the Egyptians, he would pass by the Israelite homes, provided the blood was on the doorposts. God's promise was: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13).

Think of that first passover. Imagine a man walking back to his family, after hearing Moses explain everything. Perhaps his face is flushed with solemn excitement. Perhaps his hands are trembling. He gathers his family around him and explains how the Lord is going to kill the firstborn son in every Egyptian home. But as an Israelite he will pick a perfect lamb from his flock and keep it separate, from the tenth until the fourteenth day of the month. Then on the evening of the fourteenth day he will kill the lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorposts. The lamb will die instead of the firstborn in the family.

The Israelite children would take an interest in all of this. Some were going to ask, "What mean ye by this service?" (Exodus 12:26). Think of a firstborn son who took really seriously what his father had told him. He would tremble, knowing that if anything was done wrongly, he would be killed when the destroyer passed through the land.

We can imagine him asking his father if he could go with him to select the lamb. How very carefully he would examine that lamb! "Father," he might say, "not that lamb. Look closer! Can't you see? It has a very tiny injury on his leg. Father, it must be a perfect lamb or it will never be accepted in my place. If it is not absolutely perfect, even if it is killed, I will still have to die." His heart would be pounding, afraid of a mistake being made.

After the lamb had been chosen, we can think of him going every day to the place where it was kept separate from the others. He would examine that lamb again – not just once, but over and over. How carefully he would check for any mark or sign of disease or the smallest injury that may have developed! He would spend a lot of time and spare no effort in making sure that the lamb was perfect. The consequences for him were so great – it was a matter of life and death.

As the days went by, it would not surprise us if he began to love that lamb that he studied so intensely. In front of him was a perfect lamb, with no blemish at all, in the fullness of its life and totally innocent. He knew that the lamb was going to die, even though it had done nothing wrong. But *he* had. He was a sinner, and deserved to die just like the firstborn sons among the

Egyptians. When the time arrived for his father to take his sharp knife and kill the lamb, he would feel as if the knife had pierced right through him, for the lamb was dying in his place, as his substitute.

He knew that the killing of the lamb was not enough. How carefully he would watch his father take some blood and put it on the doorposts and lintel of the house. He would make sure that his father followed Moses' instructions perfectly. His life depended on it. He knew that during the darkness of that night, death would spread through the land. If God did not see the blood sprinkled upon his house, he would die! When midnight passed, and he was still alive to hear the bitter cry going up from every Egyptian home, how he would love that lamb that died instead of him.

There is a lesson here – the greatest lesson we can ever learn. Like the firstborn in Egypt, and the firstborn among the Israelites too, you are a sinner deserving destruction, for “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). But God has provided a way of escape for sinners: not a lamb from the flock or a kid from the goats, but His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Christ was perfectly pure, without sin of any kind: “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). He was slain for sinners: “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). He was punished with death because of His people's sins. His “blood . . . is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). When a person believes in Him and His sacrificial death, His blood is sprinkled on his soul. When God sees that faith in the blood of the cross, He passes over that person, and does not destroy him – the Lamb died already for his sins.

What the firstborn did with the passover lamb, we must do with Christ, the Lamb of God. Think of His purity. Study His perfect life and heart every day. Search the Scriptures and see: there is no fault in Him! He “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). That is vital. If there was the smallest imperfection, if He had the smallest sin, His sacrifice could not be acceptable to God. Examine His life and character in the tiniest detail, and see if you do not start to see loveliness in Him. “Think on the works that He hath done, which admiration breed; His wonders, and the judgements all which from His mouth proceed” (Psalm 105:5, metrical version).

Then, as you begin to appreciate the righteousness of the Lamb of God, think of the fourteenth day in His experience – the day when He was slain by the sword of God's justice for the sins of His people. Consider His sufferings, His agonies and pains, even the cursed death of the cross. Like the firstborn Israelite with his lamb, lay to heart that if the Lamb of God did not suffer and die, you would have to be destroyed.



And then, like the firstborn Israelite with the sprinkling of his lamb's blood on the doorposts, make sure that the blood of the Lamb of God is sprinkled on your soul, through faith. Put your trust in His death, for the forgiveness of your sins. He died in His people's place, instead of them. You will not perish in your sins if you believe in Him.

The two mission ladies came to have affection for those goats that died. In a much higher sense, we can well think the firstborn Israelite had great affection for the passover lamb that died instead of him. How much more the true Christian comes to have the greatest love for his Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ! How he rejoices in Christ's unspotted character! How he values His shed blood, applied to his soul through faith!

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## Job – Fearing God and Eschewing Evil

### 5. The Persecuted Man

*Rev David Campbell*

This series was originally a paper at the 2016 Youth Conference. The last article was on Job as a "prosperous man". This article is based on Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-8.

**S***atan in the world.* The Bible tells us that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". That is how the devil is represented in the Book of Job. An account is given of a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord; and Satan came also among them". The phrase "the sons of God" has been taken by some to be the angels. Others identify it with the professing, or believing, people of God in their worship. The latter is more likely. If this is the view to be taken, we can recognise the activity of Satan in trying to disturb and obstruct the worship of God and to accuse or harass the people of God when they are worshipping.

Satan's appearance in the Garden of Eden and his temptation of Christ in the wilderness point to the fact that, even where there is no sin to be found, the devil may appear and may seek to destroy what is good. How much more is this so when it is a company of sinners who are gathered about God's worship and they have so many shortcomings and failings. In the Parable of the Sower, the Saviour teaches us that, when the Word of the Kingdom is sown, "then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in [the person's] heart" (Matthew 13:19).

Satan responded to the question, "Whence comest thou?" by saying, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it". The devil is called "the prince of this world" and the "god of this world", in

reference to the power and control he exerts over the souls of men in a malicious and evil way, “blinding the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them”. He is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”. In Old Testament times he had great power and exerted it among the heathen nations by way of superstition and idolatry. It was a time of great ignorance and darkness. The devil continues to exert power over men in the world, but he is especially working to destroy the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. He goes up and down in the earth with deceit and violence, seeking to destroy the people of God and to keep his palace and defend his goods.

Men today mock the idea that the devil exists and that he exerts any hidden spiritual power over men. This sad unbelief in the Word of God prevails. For this reason the Bible warns of Satan's subtlety and deceit. The best disguise he uses is to convince men that he does not exist at all. He comes also as an angel of light and would, if possible, deceive the very elect. The Church of God is always exposed to his malice. Perhaps the most dangerous circumstance for the Church is when the seeds of error are sown in the Church (whether in doctrine, worship or practice) and men are unaware of the influence these seeds have. Christ even warns that there were those in some of His Churches in the New Testament, who made great profession of allegiance to Him, but whom He rejected as “the synagogue of Satan”. Let us not lose sight of what the Bible teaches concerning the devil.

*Satan and God.* In the Book of Job, the Lord asked Satan, “Hast thou considered My servant Job?” This is not a question seeking knowledge, for God knows all things. Rather it is exposing to us what Satan was doing. The Lord knew that Satan had considered Job, or set his heart on him, in a malicious way. But it is useful to us to know this – both that this is what Satan is like, and also that God knows what Satan is like and what he is considering or conspiring to do. Nothing is hidden from God and nothing even in the kingdom of darkness is secret to him. The Lord knows that Satan has a particular malice towards the more godly and righteous among men. He sees that Satan would desire to have them to sift them like wheat – to try to prove that their profession of religion is a sham. Satan's attempt to identify Job as a hypocrite and to prove that his religion is false is exposed in the Book of Job.

This is what Satan is trying to do all the time. He asked, “Doth Job fear God for nought?” He then identified what God had done to protect him and bless him. Satan thus acknowledged that these things are in God's power. Satan knew that if Job was to lose the protection, prosperity and blessings

he had, it would be the hand of God that touched him. “But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face” (1:11). Satan desired that *God would do so*. He also exerted his power and malice to make men curse God, either in their hearts, with their mouths, or by their behaviour.

Satan’s power was known to God, and his desire and malice were also known to God. God does indeed put a hedge about His people, both from the world and from the devil, and the nature of the danger often requires that hedge. All Job’s blessings were a hedge about him and, thus far in his life, he had been protected from those things which the devil most often uses to persuade men to curse God. This was God’s providence towards him. It called for the exercise of grace to live a godly life in prosperity as well as to live uprightly in times of trouble.

*Satan’s power in the case of Job.* Satan made the malicious suggestion that Job feared God only for the benefit he received. God’s answer to Satan was, “Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand” (1:12). The same permission was given (in 2:6) when the devil returned with the malicious insinuation that Job’s health was the reason for his fearing God and that, if he was unwell, he would curse God. “Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life.” In both these instances, some power was allowed to Satan, but we are not to think that it was outwith the power and government of God, or that it was not ordered, known and decreed by God.

The providences which took place in the life of Job were under God’s supreme control. It was the fire of God that fell, the great wind from the wilderness was from God also. The Sabeans and the Chaldeans were under God’s sovereign control, as were the boils. God is still the first cause and even Satan acknowledged this: “Put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh” (2:5). This did not remove the operation of second causes, which include the working of Satan, either directly on Job’s body and mind, or indirectly through the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who were moved to commit such terrible crimes. God as the first cause is altogether free and sovereign in His working, while men and devils in their corrupt and sinful ways pursue a course of sin and wickedness, according to the freedom of their natures.

God permits Satan to afflict Job, and a great part of that affliction would appear to be the perplexing thoughts in his heart over God’s dealings with him. Much of the dialogue between Job and his friends is taken up with the matter of the justice of God and His providence towards wicked men and righteous men. The three friends asserted that it is the wicked whom God punishes and that the righteous are blessed. There is truth in this teaching, as far as it goes. In the end, the wicked will be punished and the righteous

rewarded. But it is not the whole truth, and the three friends greatly erred in their application of this to the case of Job. They concluded that God was punishing him for some sin. Job argued that the wicked often prosper in this life and the righteous are often afflicted. This was a source of great trouble to him, and he was searching for an answer as to why he was being afflicted.

There can be no doubt that Satan used the outward afflictions of Job to tempt him to question God's dealings with him and to complain about them. The Lord said that Satan had moved Him to destroy Job without cause. The suggestions of Satan regarding Job were not true. God had always purposed to try Job, and Satan did more harm to himself and his kingdom by tempting Job and maliciously desiring to prove him a hypocrite. There was no cause in the life and conduct of Job for the afflictions which he suffered. God was justified when He dealt with Job in this way and Satan was defeated. Job must come to cast himself upon God as perfectly just and right in all His ways, even in His hidden ways. He could only do this because he knew his Redeemer and had the hope of eternal life. Without that, Job would have been driven to despair.

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## Thomas Boston

### 4. Minister of Ettrick

*Frank Daubney*

Last month's section of this Youth Conference paper described Boston's days as minister of the small parish of Simprin in the Scottish Borders

**T**he Lord's cause in Simprin was completely transformed in the few years following Boston's arrival. Within less than seven years, every home in the parish held family worship each morning and evening, and the singing of psalms could be heard ringing out. Instead of the thorn there had come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar there had come up the myrtle tree (see Isaiah 55:13).

The communion seasons, which Boston had restarted, became occasions of great gatherings, with many people coming from neighbouring parishes; such was the fame of Boston's preaching. His sermons were preached to his own heart before he preached them from the pulpit. He said once, "My soul went out in love flames to the Advocate with the Father" (see 1 John 2:1).

Early in 1706 Boston received an unexpected call to be minister of the parish of Ettrick in Selkirkshire. He wrote in his diary that his health was so broken that he looked more like someone about to be taken to another world rather than to another parish. He had become very fond of his flock in

Simprin, and they of him, but he was determined to discover the will of God in the matter. He visited Ettrick and preached there, to find out more about the parish's moral and religious situation. "The desolation in that parish," he says, "ever since I saw it, hath great weight on me, and I am convinced I should have more opportunity to do service for God there than here; but success is the Lord's."

The text, "He that believeth shall not make haste", was helpful to him. After much prayer he felt moved to accept the call but decided to wait for the Synod's decision and accept that as the indication of the Lord's will. In March 1707 the Synod agreed to transfer him to Ettrick. The elders representing Simprin at the Synod wept at the thought of their beloved pastor being taken from them. And Boston confessed that tears had trickled down from his own eyes too.

On 1 May 1707 Thomas Boston was inducted as minister of Ettrick – the same day the Union between Scotland and England took effect. Thinking back to his time in Simprin, he said, "Thus I parted from a people whose hearts were knit to me, and mine to them; nothing but the sense of God's command that took me there making me to part with them".

Ettrick is a large parish, approximately 10 miles long by 10 miles broad, surrounded by mountains and deep glens – the church has a mountain rising up at the very back of it. The Statistical Account of 1792 says the parish possessed no advantages, and the roads were impassable and often obstructed by snow, with insufficient bridges to cross the streams to gain access to the villages.

The parish had been without a minister for four years and there had been no regular public services in that time. Boston recorded that he "did not find the people's appetite for ordinances to have been sharpened by the long fast they had had; on the contrary, they were cold and indifferent about divine things, but keen about worldly gains to a proverb". He was deeply shocked at the behaviour of the people during divine worship. It was necessary for him to appoint two of the elders to watch against offenders both inside and outside the church during worship. There was much of what he described as "profane swearing" and "gross sins of impurity".

Another trial to him was the presence of a group of dissenters, followers of a John Macmillan, a deposed minister and leader of the Cameronians (who claimed to be followers of Richard Cameron, a Covenanter). In Boston's early years in Ettrick they were a constant source of attacks because of some points of difference. Discontented people in the congregation, and those escaping discipline, would often go to the Macmillan camp. In all of this, Boston never regretted going to Ettrick though, when he thought of

Simprin, he sometimes felt like “a bird shaken out of its nest, or an owl in the desert”.

During his first year in Ettrick, the Bostons lost an infant son of 2 years, called Ebenezer (meaning “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us”). This was a great sorrow and shock to Boston, who had called the boy by that name as an act of gratitude and dedication. When another son was born, after much heart searching by Boston, he was called Ebenezer too. Sadly this child also died, after only two months, and the further bereavement pierced the gentle father's heart and caused him a great struggle of faith.

In church, Boston preached rousing sermons on the way of salvation and preached through the whole of the *Catechism*, from beginning to end. In his second year he began to see fruit, with some people reporting that he had destroyed their false ideas and found out the secrets of their hearts.

Boston quickly put in place godly elders, men of whom he thought very highly. With their experience and friendly counsel they helped and supported him in his early struggles.

In July 1710, three years after going to Ettrick, the Lord's Supper was held for the first time. The minister felt obliged to interview all the communicants personally and, as he did this, he began to feel that he had not been, as he recorded, “altogether useless”. The sermons on the fourfold state of man, especially, had done good. From his own parish 57 people were at the Lord's table on that communion Sabbath. “Few indeed”, he said, “but more than I expected.”

Early in 1712 the British Parliament, under Queen Anne, passed an Act which re-imposed patronage and required all the ministers of Scotland to take an Oath of Abjuration (rejecting the claims of the Stuart pretenders to the throne). Refusal would mean a fine of £500, which Boston could not afford, and persistent refusal to pay would result in a minister being compelled to give up his pastoral charge.

This created alarm throughout the whole Church. Why was it necessary, they asked, for men to sign this Oath of Abjuration who, when they became ministers, had taken an oath of allegiance to the crown? Part of the purpose of the oath was to protect the Protestant Church, but it referred to the Episcopal form of government and worship used in the Church of England. How could Presbyterian ministers pledge themselves to uphold Episcopacy? The controversy about this Act almost caused a disruption in the Church. Some, who were not worried about the oath, signed, but about 300 faithful ministers, including the minister of Ettrick, refused to take the oath. Boston took steps to pass his worldly goods to his family to prevent the possibility of them being taken by the government.

When finally the deadline for signing arrived, the penalties were not put into effect for fear of the consequences of such cruel and crippling punishments. Later the Oath was watered down, but Boston still refused to sign and was prepared to lose all his property. He compared the Oath to the house of the leper which could not be cleansed but needed to be taken down.

Some people in Ettrick gossiped that their minister would not stand firm, and waited for him to fall in with the authorities; this talk hurt him deeply. They clearly did not know Thomas Boston, who might come across as a man who was easily frightened, but was solid as a rock when it came to matters of principle. Once again, his diary reveals him agonising in prayer throughout this period. He never did sign the Oath.

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*For Younger Readers*

## The Best Answer

Someone asked a group of children a very important question. It was: “When should children come to Christ?”

But what does coming to Christ mean? It means that they believe in Jesus Christ as the One who came into the world to save sinners. He died instead of sinners and then rose again. It means that they trust in Him to rescue them from all their sins.

One of the group thought children should come to Christ at 13.

Another said, “At 10”.

A third said, “At 6”.

But a girl gave a better answer. She said, “Whenever they understand who God is”.

Ask God to make you want to trust in Jesus. And ask Him to make you able to trust in Him.

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*For Junior Readers*

## On the Rock

“For from the top of the rocks I see Him.” Have you ever noticed that verse? It is in Numbers, from a speech that Balaam made. It was when Balak, the king of Moab, wanted him to curse the children of Israel. Balak took Balaam to a high place where he could look down on the people. Then

Balaam said, "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? . . . For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him."

These were the words which came back to James Saunders' mind when he was shipwrecked by a hurricane and found himself clinging to a half-submerged rock. He had been brought up to go to church and had attended Sabbath school, but sadly he was so badly behaved that the teachers had to expel him, though they were very sorry to do so. After that, he left his home town and made his way to the coast. He had no job and survived by lying and stealing. He then joined the navy, and that was how he came to be shipwrecked.

For the first time in the years since he had left his Sabbath school he thought back to his teacher, to the kindness he had shown. James remembered too how badly he had behaved and how unthankful he had been. He then began to recall some of the Bible stories he had been told and some of the verses he had learned – including, "From the top of the rocks I see Him" – came back to his memory.

In his danger and fear he thought of the Saviour of whom he had heard so much but had so long despised. There and then, on that rock, cold and wet, he knelt down and prayed earnestly that God would be the rock of his heart and his portion for ever. He discovered that his teacher's words were true, that "praying breath was never spent in vain". As daylight broke, he spotted some pieces of the wreck and he, with two other sailors, managed to reach the shore.

After that, many other precious truths from the Bible came back to James' mind. The Lord, who heard his prayer on the rock, saved his soul. His behaviour changed and he became one of the most reliable sailors on his ship. He was so appreciative of his Sabbath school teachers' efforts that, even though many years had passed, he walked all the way from the ship to find him. James told him the good news and thanked him for all his kindness.

Some years later, in a distant part of the world, James fell ill with a fever. During his illness he sent for the other sailors and read to them out of the Bible. He told them to cleave to the Rock of Ages, that never moves – the Lord Jesus Christ, who died "the just for the unjust". He encouraged them by telling them that, although he had been one of the vilest of sinners, he had found mercy. He then passed into eternity resting on the Saviour.

Will you not pray now that the Lord will have mercy on you, as he did on James Saunders? Then you would be able to say with David in Psalm 62:

"My soul with expectation depends on God indeed;

My strength and my salvation doth from Him alone proceed.



He only my salvation is, and my strong rock is He:  
He only is my sure defence; much moved I shall not be.”

*J van Kralingen*

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## “I Am not Afraid to Die”

A young boy called Johnnie told his Sabbath-school teacher: “If I could always live in this world, I should be perfectly happy”.

“Perfectly happy, Johnnie?” she replied, repeating the words slowly.

“Yes, if I could have as much money as I wanted.”

“Why can you not be happy now? God has given you everything you need.”

Johnnie said nothing; so his teacher repeated what she had said.

At last Johnnie said, “I don’t see any use in studying or working or anything else, when we must die so soon. And why should we love anybody when, perhaps, as soon as we have got to [the stage of] loving them, they will die, or else we shall.”

“Are you afraid to die, Johnnie?”

“Yes”, he answered sadly.

“Why?”

“Because it seems somehow like going into a strange house in the night without any light.”

“And yet, Johnnie, there have been people who were not only fearless when death came to them, but were even glad and thankful to leave the world. Do you understand how it could be?”

Johnnie shook his head; he did not understand. His teacher tried to explain. She told him about men and women and children who fell calmly asleep in death, even after terrible sufferings, because they trusted in Jesus. She said that loving mothers had left little children in the world without fear, because they trusted God’s promises; they felt Him to be very near to them. Johnnie listened earnestly as she spoke of Christians who “toiled, studied and loved in this world, so that they might do much for Christ, and rest with Him through the blessed years of eternity”.

Then it was time for the class to stop, and everyone went home. The teacher was not able to take her class again for several weeks, as she had to go away to look after a sick relative. When she came back she was told that Johnnie was very ill, and she went to see him.

In fact, Johnnie was dying. He was smiling brightly, as he lay in his father’s arms and his mother held his hand and wept – while the setting sun lit up the whole room.

"I am not afraid to die *now*," Johnnie told his teacher; "Jesus, who was with the martyrs, is here and He makes it very light." He was not referring to the sunlight that was streaming into the room, but to the spiritual light that was pouring into his soul. Soon Johnnie was away to heaven, where now he is really happy. It is a happiness which neither he or anyone else who trusts in Christ will ever lose.

How Johnnie lost his fear of death, we do not know. But clearly it was because, in some way, he found Christ as his Saviour. If *you* are to have a happy eternity in heaven, you too must find Christ in this world. That is why He calls you to seek Him. He says, "Seek, and ye shall find" (Matthew 7:7).

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## Looking Around Us

### The Importance of Checking Properly

During a storm in January 2016, nine tonnes of bricks fell from a wall at Oxbgangs Primary School in Edinburgh. If children had been nearby at the time, they could have been killed. The school had not long been built, and 17 other Edinburgh schools built around the same time had also to close until they were checked. This was due to concerns about the standard of building.

An expert from Northern Ireland was appointed to find out what went wrong. He has now reported, in a document 250 pages long. At first sight, none of the problems he identified, in the methods used to build the wall, may seem to be very serious. Yet clearly they were serious, because the wall fell down. A particular problem was that no one was checking properly what was happening as building work went on.

Is there anything here for us all to learn, even though we may not be involved in building work? Yes, there is. Are we checking properly to see if our soul is in a safe state? The danger is that there are serious defects in our souls. If that is so, we will perish at last, when we leave this world.

The Bible tells us to examine ourselves. Have we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, or are we going on in unbelief? Have we been born again, or have we still the same ungodly nature as we always had? Have we begun to live a godly life, or are we going on careless about God's commands? Have we begun to love the Lord Jesus as a great and glorious Saviour, or do we not care if we reject His calls to trust in Him?

These are all matters we should consider carefully. The storm of death will come to us all, sooner or later. If we are living a godly life and are trusting in Jesus for salvation from sin, we will be safe. If not, we will perish – for ever. Do not be careless. Seek the Lord now. Trust firmly in Christ.

### **Playing Cards or Glorifying God**

Recently an old man began to look for work. He declared that he wanted to do more than sit in an armchair playing cards. And he found someone who was willing to employ him.

Certainly playing cards is not a good way of passing time; it is not a way in which we can glorify God. Our greatest aim in this world should be to glorify Him. Most importantly, we should seek the good of our souls so that we might be ready to go to heaven when we die. There are many ways of helping other people. And to earn a living is useful too.

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## **The Sands of Time (5)**

This poem, by Anne Ross Cousin, turns into poetry some of what Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), the godly minister of Anwoth, wrote. Here are three more verses.

Soon shall the cup of glory  
Wash down earth's bitt'rest woes,  
Soon shall the desert briar  
Break into Eden's rose;  
The curse shall change to blessing;  
The name on earth that's banned  
Be graven on the white stone  
In Immanuel's land.

O I am my Belovèd's  
And my Belovèd's mine!  
He brings a poor vile sinner  
Into His house of wine.  
I stand upon His merit;  
I know no other stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

I shall sleep sound in Jesus,  
Filled with His likeness rise,  
To love and to adore Him,  
To see Him with these eyes.  
'Tween me and resurrection  
But paradise doth stand;  
Then, then for glory dwelling  
In Immanuel's land.

# UK Youth Conference 2017

## Arrangements

**Venue:** Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, PH2 9EG.

**Dates:** Tuesday, April 11, to Thursday, April 13.

**Chairman:** Rev Donald Macdonald.

**Lower Age Limit:** 16 years old.

**Applications:** to Rev Donald Macdonald, F P Manse, Bayhead, North Uist, HS6 5DS (please let Mr Macdonald know by March 14, if possible). See the February issue for an application form. The fee will be £40 for those in full-time employment and £20 for others. Cheques are to be made payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

## Programme

### Tuesday, April 11

2.30 pm **The Apostle Paul**

**A Character Study**

*by Rev J R Tallach*

7.00 pm **The Five Solas of the Reformation**

**Faith only, Grace only, Christ only, Scripture only, Glory of God only**

*by Rev K M Watkins*

### Wednesday, April 12

9.30 am **Faith & Justification**

**What the Bible Teaches**

*by Rev Roderick Macleod*

2.30 pm **Historical Tour**

**of St Andrews**

*conducted by Rev D W B Somerset*

7.00 pm **Challenges to the Church**

**In a Godless, Atheistic and Secular World**

*by Mr Matthew Vogan*

### Thursday, April 13

9.30 am **Repentance**

**Encouragements and Motives**

*by Rev W A Weale*

**Price £1.00**