

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Cover Picture: Sunset at Galveston Island, Texas. See page 132.

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The Best Refuge in Trouble

Sheryl Sandberg has been hugely successful in her career and is very wealthy. She is the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook and is described as a billionaire. She and her husband were celebrating a friend's fiftieth birthday in a Mexican holiday resort, where the villa they stayed in cost around £10 000 for each night – that is how well-off they were.

But disaster struck. Her husband, to whom she was very close, collapsed suddenly and died. He was just 47. A friend recalled the scene in the hospital to which Sheryl Sandberg's husband was taken: "The wails of her crying in that hospital were unlike anything that I'd ever heard in my life. It was an awful, awful scene."

Perhaps the surroundings of the Mexican villa were as near to most people's idea of paradise as possible. But the only real paradise that this earth has ever seen is very far back in history – at the very beginning, when Adam and Eve lived in a state of perfect innocence. And in a real paradise there can be no death.

But Satan entered the Garden of Eden; he tempted Eve; she fell into a state of sin. Adam sinned too, following her into a state of sin. That state of sin has affected every generation since then, and death has followed sin. Even in a place which seems a real paradise, death may enter; it is a most unwelcome visitor. And when death carries away someone very close, the future may seem truly awful, absolutely without hope. We should remember that all the trouble, including death, that we experience in this world is the result of sin. All the sadness that comes our way is because of sin; in a perfect paradise there is no sadness. It is only because of sin that death could enter someone's life – not necessarily because of a particular sin they have committed, but only sinners can experience sadness.

Where can we go at times of trouble and sadness? Is there hope even for those who wail from the depths of trouble? We might ask, somewhat like Peter, "To whom shall we go?" He was asking, in effect, To whom shall we go, apart from Jesus, if we are looking for someone to save us, to teach us the way of salvation? And Peter was making clear that there is no one else

to whom he, or the other disciples, could go. It is the same today: there is no saviour but Christ.

Do you remember the exhortation to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy” (Hebrews 4:16)? But who sits on this throne? Who is ruling? He is described in the previous verse as a high priest who can “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”. This high priest is the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered Himself up, at Calvary, as a sacrifice in the place of sinners; He did this so that they might be forgiven all their sins and that a perfect salvation might be theirs.

On the third day Jesus rose from the dead; He ascended to heaven and to His place as the exalted King on the throne of glory, a throne from which He shows mercy, or grace, to needy sinners like ourselves. And when we pray, we are to ask for our needs to be supplied for Jesus' sake. When we do so, we are coming to the throne of grace. Whatever our need is, we should ask in prayer for help.

Yet there is something which we should see as most important, what we should want far more than anything else. It is the salvation of our soul. That is why we are told: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). We should realise our need as sinners, and our danger if we remain outside the kingdom of God – if we are still without the righteousness which God has provided for the sake of Christ. We ought to be in no doubt: to have our souls saved is by far the most important need that we have in this life. No wonder Christ tells us to seek for that first and foremost! If we die unsaved, a most awful eternity awaits us. Should that thought not send us immediately to the throne of grace seeking God's blessing on our souls, for Jesus' sake?

But whatever our need, we are to bring it to the throne of grace, no matter how serious it is or how trivial. And one thing stands out in *Time* magazine's article about Sheryl Sandberg: there is no suggestion that she came to the throne of grace with her deep sorrow. It seems that she did not pray. Since she lost her husband, she has written a book called, *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*, to help others experiencing grief. Again, from the few snippets about the book mentioned in the article, it seems highly unlikely that it contains any reference to prayer. Yes, many people may find the book helpful; yet let us be clear: prayer, and the One who sits on the throne of grace, ought to be our first refuge in times of trouble.

One thing is sure: we will all experience trouble in this life; we will probably experience the loss of loved ones through death. So we ought to pray regularly – it should become, so to speak, natural for us to go to the

throne of grace. Things may seem to go on very smoothly at present, but no one should assume that this will continue. Sooner or later, trouble is bound to come our way. If people are not in the habit of praying for their souls, for forgiveness of sin, for holiness and for help in all sorts of circumstances, whether very difficult or less difficult, they may find it hard to pray even in the most tragic of situations, such as the sudden death of someone very close to them. They may not even think of doing so. What a loss for them!

It was different with George Munro, a godly man who lived in Farr, a small village on the north coast of Scotland, and died in 1937. He and his wife had just one son; they hoped that he would be a support to them if they were to experience old age. Instead the son died as a young man after a short illness. George felt very sad, but we can be sure that he brought all his troubles and concerns to the throne of grace. Although prayer could not bring his son back to life – George would have known better than to ask for that – yet we can believe that God, who is always faithful to His children, heard his prayers and supported him in his time of great trouble. Indeed the elder who wrote about George's life believed that all his sorrow worked for his good (no doubt what he really meant was George's spiritual good).

How helpful it is in a time of serious trouble to go to God in prayer! How good if we can come to Him as one whom we know to be in control of everything – realising that, however serious our situation, things will never spiral out of His control! No doubt George Munro understood this in his time of great sorrow, and it must have been a great support to him. The God who rules over everything is doing so particularly for the good of His children, those who are trusting in Him, who have fled to Him for refuge – particularly because of sin, its guilt and its pollution, but also in their other troubles. And in answer to their prayers, the Lord strengthens them to face the future.

We too should learn to commit everything to God in prayer: everything we expect to do, every conversation we are to have, every friendship we hope to establish, and every change that may take place in our lives. If we learn to do so, we will discover that God does answer prayer.

You too must die, perhaps without warning. If you have not already fled to Christ as a refuge from sin and from its consequences, how necessary to seek Him now, before it is too late! How appropriate to pray, as Paul did, to “be found in [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). If we do receive that righteousness, then we will be brought at last, as Paul was, to the perfect paradise which is heaven. May we seek the Lord earnestly now!

Conscience

God's Justice System Within Us

Matthew Vogan

Conscience tells us what is right and what is wrong. It is doing its job when you have done something you knew was wrong and felt guilty. Perhaps it was like a voice in your head that kept reminding you how wrong it was.

Two words make up the word conscience: *con* means “with” and *science* here means “knowledge”. Literally, it means knowledge with yourself, but it also means knowledge of ourselves shared with God. It is like having a judge within you of all your thoughts, words and actions. It knows what you have done and passes judgement on it. If our conscience is working as it should and is informed by God's Word, then the judgement it passes should reflect the judgement of God. He put a conscience within us. He gave us a conscience that is meant to be informed by His perfect requirements. He has revealed His will for us in the Scriptures, and conscience must be informed by this to work properly; otherwise it is “defiled” (Titus 1:15).

Conscience has many God-given roles to carry out. It is like a system of justice inside us. One older writer (Richard Sibbes) describes it as a court within the soul where there is a register, witnesses, an accuser, a judge and an executioner. Such ideas were common amongst the Puritans in the 1700s.

We can think of it in a similar way. There is a crime scene, where God's law has been broken. Conscience is the eye-witness who recognises what is wrong and has witnessed it. It “calls the police” and reports what has happened. It is the role of conscience to testify to what is good and bad (Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12).

But it is none other than conscience that does this work of the police officer as well. Like a police officer, conscience carefully notes the evidence. It takes a witness statement. Conscience is also God's sergeant (as William Gurnall, another Puritan, put it) to arrest the sinner. It puts the sinner in the prison of guilt. Conscience, as the police officer, gives all the testimony and evidence to the crown prosecution service.

When the case is prepared for court, conscience is also the prosecuting lawyer. It is the crown prosecution service for the King of heaven. A court is set up and the soul summoned to be put on trial. There is a case made to prove guilt according to God's Word and law. Conscience accuses (Romans 2:15). It echoes the voice of the law; if conscience truly acknowledges the law, this will stop its mouth from making any counter arguments (Romans 3:19).

Conscience was the accuser within Joseph's brothers. They felt their guilt,

even though it was about 20 years after their crime. When they had been in prison for three days and were told to bring their youngest brother as proof of their words, they said, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us” (Genesis 42:21). No one except their conscience was accusing them or suggesting the connection between these things. We are also told that, when they saw the money in the sacks, “their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?” (Genesis 42:28). Their heart failing them and making them afraid was conscience accusing them.

Conscience is also the judge in this court. It examines the law and decides whether God’s law has been broken and it condemns sin (Romans 14:22; 1 John 3:20-21). In John 8:9 conscience convicts as a judge within, in response to the challenge of Christ. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost also, when people “were pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37).

Sometimes conscience will excuse (Rom 2:15). It will not condemn but rather find the person not guilty. Conscience is not acting properly if it will acquit on the basis of anything less than the death and perfect righteousness of Christ. When sinners are justified before God they are pardoned and declared righteous because of Christ. This takes place in the court of heaven, where God is judge. Conscience as the lesser judge must accept that sentence too and declare it (Romans 8:1; 1 John 3:20-21).

Conscience is also the executioner. It was so for Judas whose conscience told him he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood. It inflicted severe blows on his soul. Some older writers speak of “a flash of hell” sometimes coming into the conscience after sin has been committed. It condemned Judas to such an extent that he was plunged in despair and went out and hanged himself.

On the day of judgement, the books will be opened (Revelation 20:12), and several writers suggest that one of these will be the book of conscience. Its records will be opened. Romans 2:15 speaks of how conscience works within people: “Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another”. Romans 2:16 speaks of the day of judgement, when “God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ”. When we compare these verses together, it is clear that conscience will do its work on the day when secrets are made manifest. It is very solemn to realise that conscience continues to do its work even in hell. The Lord Jesus speaks about it as the “worm that dieth not” (Mark 9:44).

In the case of believers, conscience is not so much executioner as the one appointed by the judge to chastise. It is like corporal (bodily) punishment

rather than capital punishment (execution). Indeed, it is a chastisement more than a punishment. Thus, after David had cut off part of Saul's robe as he lay sleeping, David's "heart smote him" (1 Samuel 24:5). At another time his conscience brought him to say, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). The believer's heart smites him with grief for offending against the love and grace received from the Lord. They judge themselves so that they may not "be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32).

Perhaps it is easy to see why Richard Sibbes said that "conscience . . . is either the greatest friend or the greatest enemy in the world" (see 1 Timothy 1:5,19; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16). We must take care of offending conscience by acting contrary to it, in so far as it echoes God's Word. There is such a thing as peace of conscience, and it ought to be highly treasured. It is only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that can truly cleanse and heal the conscience. Samuel Rutherford said that we take nothing with us to the grave except a good or bad conscience.

What is your conscience telling you?

The Five Solas of the Reformation

1. Scripture Alone

Rev K M Watkins

S*ola* in Latin means *only* or *alone*. The *Five Solas* of the Reformation are: Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone, grace alone, God's glory alone.

If you have not heard of the Five Solas before, most of you have heard of the Five Points of Calvinism. They are known by the initials TULIP, standing for Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints. If you search through the vast writings of John Calvin, you will not find a catalogued list of those Five Points. They were not gathered together in a list until long after Calvin's death. Yet they are an accurate summary of Calvin's biblical teaching about salvation.

It is the same with the Five Solas of the Reformation. However hard and long you search through the extensive writings of the Reformers, you will not find these five doctrines collected together in a specific list. That did not happen until hundreds of years after the Reformation – it was probably not done for the first time until the twentieth century. Yet the Five Solas accurately summarise five key scriptural principles that fired the Reformation movement 500 years ago. In Luther's commentary on Galatians, the words "faith alone" appear more than 30 times.

There is a further likeness between the Five Points and the Five Solas. They are both the biblical response to heresy. Regarding the Five Points, a man in Holland called Jacobus Arminius and his followers had advocated a five-point system of salvation that was not biblical. The sound ministers at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19 produced its Canons, which systematically set out the biblical response to Arminianism – and those answers came to be called the Five Points of Calvinism.

Returning to the time of the Reformation, five unbiblical principles were supporting the heresies and abuses of Roman Catholicism. The Five Solas refuted those principles with true, scriptural ones. The Five Solas thus define Protestantism over against Romanism, just as the Five Points distinguish Calvinism from Arminianism.

Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone, grace alone, God's glory alone – if you hold these Five Solas in your head as your doctrine, they show you to be a Protestant rather than a Roman Catholic. But the Five Solas are more than a sectarian divide rooted in historical events 500 years ago. If you hold these Five Solas in your heart – if they become the very substance of your personal religion – that means you are a truly saved Christian rather than a merely outward one.

It is hard to appreciate the depths of darkness, deadness and depravity to which Roman Catholicism had sunk before the Reformation. The Five Solas – by way of contrast – emphasise the scriptural light, life and holiness that appeared in the Reformation. On 31 October 1517, Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church, an act which triggered the beginning of the Reformation. We will look at the Five Solas in turn, trying to see them from Luther's point of view.

1. Sola Scriptura – Scripture Alone. Like almost everyone in Europe at the time, Martin Luther was born a Roman Catholic. Rome did not directly say that she rejected the Bible. But she drew on further sources of authority additional to it, which actually contradicted it, thus “making the word of God of none effect” (Mark 7:13). Luther's father was a miner, so when young Martin was caught in a terrifying thunderstorm, he did not pray to God, but to St Anne, the patron saint of miners. He vowed that he would become a monk if he escaped alive, because Rome taught that this was the best way he could devote the rest of his life to God. Luther kept that vow and within two weeks, at the age of 21, he had forsaken the plan of becoming a well-paid lawyer, and he was in a monastery. None of this came from the Bible! Rather, it came from the traditions of Rome, which had no connection with Scripture.

Romanism has three sources of authority: Scripture, tradition and the

“magisterium”. For Rome, it is not just Scripture – what God has said. It is also Tradition – what men have done. And it is the “magisterium” – what the Church has authoritatively taught. It is thought that the Pope and the Church’s bishops have the right to assert true doctrine, even doctrine that is absent from or contrary to Scripture, such as the papal teachings about Mary’s immaculate conception and assumption into heaven. The point to notice is not that Scripture is included, but that other authorities are added to it. It is not Scripture *alone*; it is Scripture *plus*.

The first Sola, on the other hand, acknowledges the Bible as “the *only* rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy” God, as *The Shorter Catechism* puts it in its second answer. The key word is *only* – the only rule. True religion submits to the claims of Scripture exclusively, saying: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). “What saith the Scripture?” is not just one of many questions to be asked. It is the only question that needs to be asked. Scripture’s answer is the only answer that matters.

Scripture’s sole authority is based on its inspiration by God the Holy Spirit. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). It is the very Word of God. Scripture then must be sufficient. If it is Scripture alone, it must contain everything we need. And it does: not only is it able to make us wise unto salvation, but also to instruct us thoroughly in all things pertaining to life and godliness (see 2 Timothy 3:17).

Providence hedged Luther in to the Bible. In October 1512, he was appointed Doctor of Theology at Wittenberg University. It then became his daily calling to study and teach the Bible. Staupitz, Luther’s superior at the monastery, had organised this, hoping it would help the troubled monk, but in the end it was the Lord’s doing. Luther could hardly have gone to better places in the Word: he lectured through the Book of Psalms, and then he turned to Romans, followed by Galatians.

Luther was driven to Scripture alone by spiritual trouble. His conscience was more and more tormented because of his sin, and he could find no relief anywhere else. The monks did not have the solution. Even a visit to Rome itself could not help. The penances which Rome prescribed, the self-whipping and the confessional were never enough – there was always one more unconfessed sin that ruined everything, leaving Luther with a conscience as evil and unpurged from dead works as before.

Where was the answer? It was in Scripture, and in Scripture alone. And that is how relief came. As he submitted to the absolute and only authority of Scripture, God brought Luther to salvation.

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, when he was called to answer for his

teaching, he is reported to have said: “Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

In his commentary on Genesis (chapter 41), Luther wrote: “From the beginning of my reformation I have asked God to send me neither dreams, nor visions, nor angels, but to give me the right understanding of His Word, the Holy Scriptures; for as long as I have God’s Word, I know that I am walking in His way and that I shall not fall into any error or delusion”.

After his appearance at the Diet of Worms, Luther’s life was in danger. Friends whisked him away to the safety of Wartburg castle where he remained for almost a year. The place he gave to Scripture was clear, for he spent much effort while there on translating the New Testament into German, the common language of his people. How different to Roman Catholicism, which had kept the Bible locked up in Latin, so that only church leaders would have access to it!

For Junior Readers

God Willing

Have you ever wondered what the letters *DV* stand for? They stand for the Latin words *Deo volente*, which mean *God willing*. To say this is a way of acknowledging that God rules over everything that happens in our lives; so whatever we plan happens only with God’s permission. The Word of God actually instructs us to do this. If you look up the Epistle of James, you will find some verses towards the end of chapter 4 that deal with this:

“Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.”

David was conscious of this when he said, “My times are in Thy hand” (Psalm 31:15), and this is something we all need to remember. Not only are our plans in God’s hands but also the continuance of our lives. What does James say about our life? It is just like “a vapour”, a puff of steam, something you cannot hold onto, that appears briefly and then disappears. So we should ever remember that we are always dependent on God’s will.

In days gone by, these words, *God willing*, were commonly used, even by people in government. They would be added to notices and announcements of planned events. But, gradually, as people became less conscious of God, these words would be left out.

One of the first times this happened in Britain was in 1902. Queen Victoria had died, and plans were being made for her eldest son, Edward the Seventh, to be crowned in April of that year. In all the announcements which were sent out, these two letters *DV* were missing.

All the arrangements were completed. Kings and Emperors from all parts of the world had been invited to attend the royal ceremony. The King's proclamations were printed and displayed, but the letters *DV* were nowhere to be seen!

The date and time were fixed, and Westminster Abbey was to be the place for the coronation. But then King Edward was taken ill; he came down with appendicitis, and the coronation had to be put off for months! So God had acted and all man's plans were overturned! God's will and His providence had more power than all the plans of men!

Remember that *your* life and *your* plans are all in God's hands? The Bible says, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him".

J van Kralingen

Safety in the Lighthouse

On Friday, 7 September 1900, John H Poe boarded a train in New Orleans for Galveston, Texas. It was an overnight train, and early on the morning of Saturday, September 8, he switched trains in Beaumont for the last leg of his journey, before he would board a ferry for Galveston Island. But as the train made its way along the coast, John would have noticed, out of the left window of the coach, storm clouds coming from the sea. Soon, the clouds turned into a terrible downpour with fierce winds. The rain came down in torrents, the wind lashing it against the windows.

John was not the only passenger on the train – there were 95 of them altogether. As the train neared the southern point of Bolivar Peninsula, it began to slow down and soon stopped; the heavy rain combined with the storm surge had flooded the tracks. What John and the other passengers did not know was that they were encountering the deadliest hurricane ever to make landfall in North America.

John noticed through the sheets of rain that there was a lighthouse a quarter of a mile away. With the flood waters now sweeping through the coach cars, he resolved with nine other passengers to leave the train and

make the hazardous journey through the wind, rain and storm surge. The sea itself was now sweeping over the peninsula.

Keeping close to one another, John and the others at last made it to the safety of the lighthouse. It was strong; when they entered they noticed there were already scores of forlorn men, women and children whom the lighthouse keeper, H C Claiborne, had helped rescue. Just as John was stepping into the lighthouse, he took one final look at the train. Smoke was billowing from its stack, and he thought he saw it moving. With the sea now flooding the peninsula, John went into the lighthouse. Had he made the right choice?

It turns out that he did. Inside the lighthouse, he and the others were safe from the devastating storm. On the other hand, all 85 of the remaining passengers on the train perished.

The Scriptures tell us that, because of sin, the storm of God's wrath is coming – it will meet every Christless sinner at the day of his death. But God in His mercy has prepared a refuge for sinners in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as John Poe was saved from the terrible storm of 8 September 1900, by finding refuge in the Bolivar lighthouse, so also shall every sinner be saved that finds refuge in Christ. This glorious Person is a “hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest” (Isaiah 32:2).

But John had to forsake the train – it was not safe to remain there. So must every sinner part with everything that keeps him from Christ. But once found in Christ, the sinner will discover that he is now safe – none perish that trust in Him.

Joseph Smith

Repentance

2. Encouragements

Rev W A Weale

This is the second part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. Last month's section dealt with (1) the meaning and (2) the importance of repentance.

3. The Encouragements for Repentance. One may begin to see what repentance is and how important it is, but may feel there is no hope that he will repent. While he knows he ought to repent and must repent, yet he does not have the mind or the heart to do so. Well, the Bible gives a number of great encouragements to such a person. What are they?

(1.) *Repentance is a grace.* This is how the definition in *The Shorter Catechism* begins: “Repentance unto life is a saving grace”, and the Scripture proof for this is found in Acts 11:18. There, after Peter's explanation to the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem of what happened in the house of Cornelius,

those who heard him “glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life”. This means that repentance is not something that we naturally have or can work up in ourselves; it is what God must give us. As Richard Baxter puts it, “only the heart Maker can be the great heart Breaker”.

So it is outwith ourselves. With natural and legal repentance this is not so. [See last month's article for the meanings of *legal* and *evangelical* repentance.] Everyone has a conscience (though in many people this is scarcely obvious). So everyone has pangs of remorse and guilt when they do certain things. Also one may, while still without grace, have legal repentance from fear of punishment. But with evangelical repentance, or repentance unto life, it is different. Without grace there is not even the desire to repent; the reason is that, without grace, there is no desire to please God. How then is this an encouragement to repent? (The other four encouragements also answer this question.)

(2.) Because *there is One anointed a Prince and a Saviour to give this grace of repentance* as well as remission of sins. This is a great encouragement, however much one may feel one's sins, for He said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17), and again, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). J C Ryle, in his excellent chapter on repentance in *Old Paths*, puts it like this: “I answer all doubts, and questions, and difficulties, and objections and fears with this simple argument. I say to everyone who wants encouragement, Look at Christ; think of Christ. Consider Jesus Christ the Lord, and then doubt about repentance no more.”

(3.) Because *there are promises referring to this grace* – that is, there are promises to those that ask for repentance. In other words, the person who knows that he ought to repent and must repent, but has not the mind or spirit to repent, is encouraged to come to God and confess that this is the case and ask for the grace, or plead the promise, “Ask and it shall be given you . . .”. And again: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” (Luke 11:9,13).

When we go back to the Old Testament Scriptures we have further such promises, as in Zechariah 12:10: “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”.

We may add to these references the fact that God has put on record that

He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9) and that “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7). Then we must conclude that there are many encouragements for repentance throughout the Word of God.

(4.) Because *there are examples in the Bible of God’s mercy toward those who are penitent*. J C Ryle puts this well also: “Read the story of David. What sin can be greater than David’s sin? But when David turned to the Lord and said, ‘I have sinned against the Lord’, the answer came, ‘The Lord . . . hath put away thy sin’ (2 Samuel 12:13).

“Read the story of Manasseh. What wickedness could have been greater than his? He killed his own children. He turned his back on his father’s God. He placed idols in the temple. And yet, when Manasseh was in prison and humbled himself and prayed to the Lord, the Lord heard his prayer and brought him out of captivity (2 Chronicles 33:1-13).

“Read the history of Peter. What apostasy could be greater than his? He denied his Master three times with an oath! And yet, when Peter wept, and mourned for his sin, there was mercy even for Peter, and penitent Peter was restored to his Master’s favour (Mark 16:7).

“Read the story of the penitent thief. What case could be more desperate than his? He was a dying man on the brink of hell. Yet when he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,’ at once the marvellous answer came, ‘Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou [even thou] be with Me in Paradise’ (Luke 23:39-43).”

Many other examples could be given, and these are all for our encouragement – to lead us to repentance. So Ryle concludes, “They are all patterns of God’s long-suffering, patterns of God’s mercy, patterns of God’s willingness to receive penitent sinners. They are proofs of what God’s grace can do. They are a cloud of witnesses, proving that it is worthwhile for man to repent – that there is encouragement for man to turn to God, and that ‘such an one as goeth on still’ in his sins is utterly without excuse. ‘The goodness of God leadeth . . . to repentance’ (Romans 2:4).”

(5.) Because *repentance always comes with a companion*. That companion is faith. When someone says that he cannot repent, he is saying also that he cannot believe, for if he truly believed, he would repent, and the one who repents truly believes. The truth is that faith and repentance go together. They are twin graces, and the existence of the one implies the other.

So here is the encouragement for repentance: repentance is a gift that is promised to the one who asks. And to have repentance implies that one also has the faith that unites to Christ, and all the blessing that one needs, both for time and eternity, is secured.

Will God Wipe Away Your Tears?

2. A Place Where There Is Only Crying

J C Ryle

This is another part of a tract, on Revelation 21:4, written by this noted English minister. No doubt it was originally a sermon. It has been edited. The subject of the first section, in May, was: There is a place – here in this life – where there is a great deal of crying.

Revelation 21:4. *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.*

I will now speak of the second place which I promised to tell you something about. *There is a place where there is nothing else but crying.*

What is this place? It is the place to which all bad people go when they are dead. It is the place which the Bible calls hell. In hell there is no laughter or smiling. There is nothing but “weeping and gnashing of teeth”. In hell there is no happiness. Those who go there cry on, night and day, without stopping.

They have no rest. They never go to sleep and wake up happy. They never stop crying in hell.

I am sorry to tell you that there are many people going to hell. “Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat”. I am afraid that many young people are going to hell. I see many boys and girls who are so naughty and ill-behaved that I am sure they are not fit for heaven. And if they are not fit for heaven, where will they go if they die? There is only one other place to which they can go. *They must go to hell.*

It makes me sad to say these things. I cannot bear the thought of boys and girls going to that dreadful place where there is nothing but crying. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is that you may not go to hell. But I want you to know some things which you must think about if you would not go to hell. Listen to me now while I ask you a few questions.

For one thing I will ask you: Do you love Jesus Christ? You ought to love Him. He died on the cross for the sins of others, that He might save them from hell. He allowed Himself to be shut up in the dark prison of the grave, that sins might be forgiven, and that people might not be chained in hell for ever. Dear children, think about this. If you love nothing but play, eating and drinking, fine clothes and story books, and do not love Christ, you are not in the right way. Take care. If you are not careful, you will go at last to the place where there is *nothing but crying.*

I will ask you another thing: Do you try to please Christ? You ought to do so. I read in the Bible that Jesus Christ said, “If ye love Me, keep My

commandments”; “Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”. Think about this. If you are selfish, or become angry, or tell lies, or quarrel with one another, or do not do as you are told, you are not Christ’s friends. Take care. If you are not careful, you will go at last to the place where there is *nothing but crying*.

I will ask you another thing: Do you keep the Sabbath holy? You ought to do so. God commands it; it is for your good. I once heard of a boy who went to play on the ice on Sabbath instead of coming home straight from church.

“Tommy,” said his mother, “why did you do so?”

“Mother,” said Tommy, “I did not remember that it was Sabbath.”

“Tommy,” said his mother, “that is the very thing God told you not to do. He said in the Fourth Commandment, *remember*: “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy”.

Dear young reader, think about this. If you do not like to give God one day in the week, your hearts are not right. Take care. If you are not careful, you will go at last to the place where there is *nothing but crying*.

I will ask you another thing: Do you say your prayers? You ought to do so. God will never be a friend to you if you do not speak to Him, and ask Him to take care of your soul and make you good. If you never pray, or if you say your prayers without thinking, your heart will soon be full of mischief and sin. It will never be empty for a day.

I once heard of a boy to whom someone gave a little garden; it was all full of flowers. But he did nothing for it. He never raked it, or weeded it. And after a few weeks the weeds came up so thick that the flowers died. Dear children, think of this. If you do not ask God to put the Holy Spirit in your hearts, the devil will soon fill them with sin. Take care. If you are not careful, you will go at last to the place where there is *nothing but crying*.

I will ask you one more question: Do you read your Bible? You ought to do so. That beautiful book is able to keep you from hell and save your soul. If you use the Bible rightly, you will not be hurt by the devil. I once heard of a little boy in Africa who was sleeping with his father in the open air, near a fire. He awoke in the middle of the night, and saw a great lion close to him, looking as if it was going to seize him. The little boy took up a lighted stick out of the fire, and put it in the lion’s face and drove him away.

Dear young reader, think of this. The devil is “a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”. But he cannot harm you if you make a right use of the Bible. If you would drive him from you, you must read your Bible. If you can read your Bible and yet neglect it, you are in great danger. Take care. If you are not careful, the devil will carry you off to the place where there is *nothing but crying*.

Remember my five questions. Think of them often, and examine your own heart by them. I am not afraid about young people who love Jesus and try to please Him, who keep the Sabbath holy and pray and read their Bibles. I am not afraid that they will go to hell when they die. But I am afraid about young people who care nothing about these things. I believe they are in great danger.

For Younger Readers

On the Last Day

They were two people living in Wiltshire, in England – a husband and his wife. God changed her heart; so she now tried to do what was right.

Her husband did not like the change in his wife. He did not like her going to church to worship God, and he tried to stop her. Sometimes he put her out of their house at night, even in winter.

She did not tell anyone what was happening. She just went into a field and spent the night praying. Most of all, she prayed for her husband, that God would convert him too. And she knew that God is in control of everything.

She then decided to spend one hour each day praying to God for her husband. She kept this up for a whole year, but there was no change in him.

Then she decided to go on praying for him for another six months. On the last day she went to pray at 12 o'clock. She thought it would be the last time. She did not think God wanted to answer her prayer. So she would stop.

Soon her husband came home from work for his dinner, but he was feeling very sad. Instead of eating his food, he went to his bedroom. His wife followed him and saw that he went to pray. This was a real change. How thankful she must have been! She asked him: "What is the matter?"

At 12 o'clock, he told her, a verse from the Bible came into his mind. He could not get rid of it. He was sure he would go to hell.

He wife told him he should pray, but he said, "It is no use". He felt he could not be forgiven for his sins.

But he was now very sorry for how he had treated his wife. He asked her: "Will you forgive me?"

"O yes", she told him. Of course, she would.

Then he asked, "Will you pray for me now?"

Of course, she would pray for him. They went down on their knees together and prayed.

Yes, God did hear prayer. He converted her husband. We can be sure that he was nice to her for the rest of their lives and tried to obey God.

The Christian

This poem originally appeared in the magazine, *The Little Gleaner*. It is printed here with slight editing.

When I reflect how long I trod
Those crowded paths that led from
God –
That God who gave me breath –
I stand amazed that love divine
Should rescue this poor soul of mine
From everlasting death.

And not content to sin alone,
I hurried my companions on
Along the downward road.
Oft did the Holy Spirit cry,
“Turn, sinner, turn, why will ye die?
Seek happiness in God.”

But I refused to hear His voice,
And made this passing world my
choice,

With all its empty joys.
I sought delight in pleasure’s sound,
But solid bliss I never found;
I could not grasp the prize.

Often amidst the busy throng –
As conscience whispered, “You are
wrong;

You are not fit to die” –
Resolved sometime I would be good,
And from these follies fly,
But soon, alas, my vows I broke,
I still wore Satan’s galling yoke,
A wretched captive led;
And vainly thought I could repent
Upon a dying bed.

At length a ray of heavenly light

Shone on my soul with lustre bright;
I saw myself undone.
I wept and read and tried to pray,
But terror filled me all the day,
I knew not where to run.

Sometimes a beam of hope would
dart

Into my trembling, fearful heart,
Which kept me from despair;
And God was pleased to give me
grace

To seek with earnestness His face,
By humble, fervent prayer.
For though the Almighty dwells on
high

In light unpierced by mortal eye,
He loves the contrite soul.

He kindly bade my fears depart,
Spoke peace and pardon to my heart,
And made the wounded whole.
Then did my heart rejoice and say,
“The Lord has turned His wrath
away,

And set the captive free”.
My Father owned His wandering
child,

I felt my God was reconciled,
That Jesus died for me.

O may my life show forth His praise
Who died a shameful death, to raise
A rebel to a throne!
May every act and thought and word
Be to the glory of my God!

I'd live to God alone,
When I by faith shall view the place,
Where I, with all the ransomed race,
Shall praise redeeming love.

To sing the praise of God is sweet,
But sweeter still above,

When, undisturbed and free from sin,
We see without a veil between
Th'unclouded God most high,
Adoring bow before His face,
And tell the wonders of His grace
To all eternity.

Looking Around Us

Forbidding to Marry

"I would have been a great father. I could have been a great husband." These are the rather boastful words of a young Roman Catholic priest in Illinois, USA. He added, "My love for God is so strong that I willingly gave that up".

Priests are not allowed to marry. But God does not tell anyone not to marry a wife. In fact the Bible condemns those who are "forbidding to marry" (1 Timothy 4:3). This is another example of what is described in the article earlier in this issue, on "Scripture Alone", of Rome adding to Scripture and of teaching contrary to it.

It does not show strong love to God – or any kind of love to God – to add to Scripture. That is where God has revealed His law – showing us His will for how we should live. Marriage, after all – between one man and one woman – is a good gift from God for mankind. Even when human beings were perfect, before the Fall, they were allowed to marry; in fact, God Himself arranged the marriage between Adam and Eve.

When Martin Luther was delivered, at the Reformation, from the false teachings of Rome, he married. It was good for him to do so and he thoroughly enjoyed marriage. John Calvin too married, and so may every minister. When God calls a minister to preach the Word of God, He does not deny Him such blessings as a wife; she may be a great help to him.

Priests are not really ministers of the Word; they offer sacrifice. At least Rome claims they have power to offer up Christ, in the mass. It is as if they were still in the Old Testament age – before Christ offered Himself up as a perfect sacrifice, one that does not need to be repeated. For any man to claim he can sacrifice Christ is blasphemy. How much happier priests might be if they were allowed to marry a wife like other men! May this priest, and many others, learn that obedience to Roman rules is not the same as love to God!

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