

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Volume 82

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Looking for Answers

James Webb ran NASA, the American space agency in the 1960s, a critical period in the history of space exploration. Now he is being remembered in connection with a massive project: the building of the James Webb Space Telescope. It has already taken more than 20 years to develop the telescope, at the enormous cost of \$8.7 billion (£6.7 billion).

NASA hopes to fire this new telescope into space in October 2018. It is to be placed 1 million miles away from the earth at a point where the gravity of the earth and the gravity of the sun balance each other. They will hold the telescope in more or less the same position. From there it is to scan the heavens and send information back to earth in much greater detail than has ever yet been possible.

In defence of this expense, NASA's present director of astrophysics, Paul Hertz, states, "Humankind has always wondered about the universe, and now our telescope technology has caught up with our questions". These questions very much relate to the beginning of everything. Scientists hope that they will be able to see how a far-away galaxy looked 13.6 billion years ago, which they assume was "only" 200 million years after the big bang.

But this timescale is completely wrong. There is no need to spend huge amounts of money to discover how the universe began. It was not the result of a big bang which happened a very, very long time ago. There is a Creator, the one living and true God; He has unlimited power. And He used that unlimited power to create this wonderful world and all the living creatures in it. He created all that we can see in the sky and everything that we cannot see with the naked eye – what can only be seen with the help of a telescope. Some objects in space are so far away from the earth that a fantastically-expensive telescope is needed if we are ever to know that they exist.

There is a tremendous determination on the part of many scientists – most certainly not *all* scientists – to deny that the universe and everything in it came into existence by the power of God. They would much rather believe the idea of evolution – that everything developed in some random way.

Yet however brilliant these scientists are, we should not be influenced

away from the teachings of the Bible. There is a God, and He has revealed Himself. First, He has revealed Himself in the world around us. It should be obvious that tremendous power was needed to bring everything into existence – and also very great wisdom, to design everything so that, for instance, living creatures can absorb nourishment from their food and move around effectively. If people would stand back from all the propaganda that comes from so many directions, they would quickly realise that it is impossible for a human being, or any other creature, to come into existence by chance – even if there were to be a huge number of little steps on the way. There must have been a supreme power directing it all.

But God has more clearly revealed Himself in the Bible. We can learn far more about God and what He has done from the Bible than from what we see in nature – though what we see in nature leaves us without excuse if we deny that God exists. So let us sinners, on our way to eternity, make sure we do not neglect God's revelation to us in Scripture.

The Bible tells us that God's was the supreme power that brought everything into existence: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). He created all things: the whole universe, this world in particular, and everything on it, including all living creatures, and He did so in six days. Those who do not believe the Bible may ridicule such a statement, but it should be obvious that if God is infinite in every way – and He is – nothing is too hard for Him. It was no difficult matter for God to create everything in just six days and to do so in such a way that it was all "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

What we most need to consider is that *God* made the human race. So He is *our* Creator, and we are under a responsibility to believe in Him and obey Him in all that He tells us to do.

The information given here about the James Webb telescope came from an article in a recent issue of *Time* magazine. The article draws toward a conclusion by stating: "It says something both odd and exciting about our species that, while we could rightly be pre-occupied with the simple business of surviving on the one world we've got – keeping the people . . . fed and healthy and safe – we always have one eye trained outward. We can't say exactly what we're looking for – deliverance, company, answers to eternal questions – but we look out all the same."

"Eternal questions" may possibly be meant to include: How did the universe begin? And the only safe answer lies in what we have already quoted from the Book of Genesis: the eternal God created everything, and this God is in control of everything that happens today.

Here is another eternal question: What happens after death? Many assume

that we pass entirely out of existence when we die. But they do not really know. They may wish their thought to be true, but that does not make it true. For dependable, satisfactory knowledge about such matters, we need a revelation – from the One who created all things. And He has given us that revelation in the Bible, which is totally reliable in everything it says. It tells us that, beyond this life, there is a heaven of perfect blessedness and happiness which will last for ever, and a hell of utter misery and punishment which will never come to an end.

God's revelation in the Bible further tells us how the blessedness of heaven may be ours and how we may escape the misery of hell. We cannot possibly discover such things anywhere else. The Bible points us to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners, through His sufferings and death. He endured the punishment which sin deserves.

Here is another question: How can we personally be delivered from the punishment which *our* sins deserve? It is by believing in Christ. That was what Paul and Silas told the jailor in Philippi. And if we ask that question today, the answer is exactly the same: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). We are to trust in Him as the Saviour whom God has appointed for sinners like us.

There is no other way. That is what Peter made clear, as he pointed to Jesus Christ, who had been crucified. Then he added, "God raised [Him] from the dead Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10,12). By *name*, Peter means a person who has been revealed "under heaven" – in this world. There cannot be any person except Jesus who is able to save us. But, on the other hand, He has never turned away any sinner who came to Him; nor will He ever do so. That is His promise: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

The James Webb telescope is hugely expensive and, though it may discover important information, the main purpose for building it is to answer questions that do not need to be answered. There are far more important questions – such as those in some of the last few paragraphs: about how we can spend eternity in heaven, about how we can appear safely in the presence of God at death. We can find the answers to these questions in the Bible. While some well-bound copies of it may be expensive, others are available which are remarkably cheap. There is no reason for us to be in ignorance about what lies beyond this life and how we ought to prepare for our continued existence, beyond death.

One thing more: the salvation that the Bible reveals is absolutely *free*; it is "without money and without price". We must not try to earn it in any way.

For Junior Readers

Terrified on a Volcano

John Urquhart was born in the early 1860s on the island of Rona. Do you know where that is? It is a small island north of the Isle of Raasay, between the Isle of Skye and the west coast of Scotland.

John's father went to Rona as a teacher, but the Lord also used him for the good of souls in that remote place. Some of the people were converted through the services he took. Sadly he died when John was only about 8 years old. After that, his mother moved with her young children to Raasay, where she went on bringing them up to fear the Lord.

As there was no social welfare in those days, John had to go out when still young to earn a living, to help provide for his widowed mother and his younger siblings.

After some years he went to sea, as many lads from the islands did. He then came into contact with worldly boys who had not enjoyed the same privileges as he had. He sailed on various yachts, first as an assistant cook and then as a deck-hand.

On one of his journeys, the yacht he was on sailed as far as the Mediterranean Sea. It moored in the Bay of Naples opposite the well-known volcano, Mount Vesuvius. This mountain had erupted not so many years before, in 1872. Yet he and some of the other sailors went ashore and decided to do something very foolish – to climb as high up the mountain as they could and get as near as possible to the crater.

As they climbed, they began to realise that they were in danger. The soles of their boots were burning hot and they decided the best thing to do was to turn round and get down as quickly as possible. But on their way down, their feet began to sink in the lava, and the boys were terrified that they were going to be sucked into the very heart of the burning volcano!

This awful experience made a lasting impression on John's mind. Whenever he spoke about it, he always acknowledged God's goodness in preserving his body from dropping into Vesuvius and his soul from a lost eternity. It was after this that the Holy Spirit convinced him of his sinfulness and of his need of the Saviour.

In reading the Word of God and hearing it preached, he found Christ as his own Saviour – he found Christ as the One who came “to seek and to save that which was lost”. He was amazed at the infinite mercy, goodness and love of God to such a lost, miserable sinner as he felt he was.

It was after this that he moved to the town of Greenock. There he found work on the steamers which carried passengers and goods up and down

the Firth of Clyde. When the ships began to sail on the Lord's Day, John protested against the breaking of the Sabbath and, as a result of his faithfulness, he lost his job.

But the Lord provided for him, and John obtained a better job with a ship-building company in Greenock. He had better hours, better wages and was at home every night! Does that not show you that the Lord will look after you if you stand up for what is right, even though you are afraid you will lose out?

When the Free Presbyterian Church came out in 1893, John felt he could not worship in the old Free Church any longer. Some like-minded men arranged to meet with him and have a prayer meeting in his house the next Sabbath. That was the very first Free Presbyterian prayer meeting to be held in Greenock.

John remained faithful to his dying day; he was made able by the grace of God to witness for Christ, His truth and His cause in this world. Will you not seek "the Lord while He may be found", and "call upon Him while He is near"? Then you can live a godly life like John did, and "follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises".

J van Kralingen

The Lookout in the Moonlight

He was just a boy. His father and mother must have died; he had no home to go to. He was hungry and lonely. He had no friends except some thieves whom he used to help with their wicked work. Tired and frightened, he often wished for some other way to live.

It was a cold, dark night in November, and the boy was waiting for the thieves. They were planning to break into a house as the boy kept watch outside. But the moon now lit up the darkness, shining between heavy clouds, and the men wanted complete darkness so that no one would see them as they went about their sinful business. But complete darkness did not come; instead the light of the moon became brighter and brighter. The moonlight cast the boy's shadow onto the path as he tried to hide beside the house.

He heard someone move. Was it one of the thieves looking for him? he wondered. Or had the police found out what they planned to do?

No, it was someone else. He asked in quite a kind, but firm, voice: "Boy, what are you doing here so late? Go home and go to bed. Lads like you have no business in the streets at such an hour as this." The boy did not move, and the man repeated, "Go home".

In a trembling voice, the boy answered, "I have no home to go to, no bed".

"Poor fellow," said the man pityingly, "would you go to a home and a bed if I got you one?"

"I would, gladly," the boy answered as he stood shivering in the cold north-east wind. The light of the moon fell on the man's face and the boy could see his kindly smile. The man told him where to go and the boy hurried off, but the man called him back.

"But how are you going to get in, my boy? You must have a pass-ticket. Take this; this is for you. Can you read?"

"No," the lad answered sadly; "I never learned."

"Well, remember on this ticket is, 'John Three Sixteen'. Repeat it after me. Now do not forget this is to give you a home and a bed."

The boy ran off, repeating the words, and arrived breathless at the house to which he had been directed. He rang the bell; a man opened the door and asked gruffly, "Who's there?"

"It's me. I'm John Three Sixteen" – as if he thought this was his new name. He had never heard of the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 16 in the Bible.

"All right"; the doorman told him, "that's the pass for tonight. Come in."

Soon the boy was climbing into bed, glad to be out of the piercing wind and away from his evil companions. Again and again he repeated to himself: "I'll always be John Three Sixteen; it be so lucky". As yet he had no understanding of God and His control of everything in His providence.

The morning came, and the boy wakened up from a good sleep. After breakfast he left, probably not knowing where to go. But as he crossed a busy street, a cart ran over him and he was badly injured. He was taken to the nearest hospital.

He suffered severe pain; then he became seriously ill. Throughout the night, from time to time, he repeated in his illness: "John Three Sixteen, John Three Sixteen. It was to do me good, and so it has."

He was in a large ward, and many people heard his voice. Some of them picked up the New Testament lying beside them, expecting to find out what the lad meant. There they found the words: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life".

This is God's message to a lost world, and it seems that the Holy Spirit blessed it that night to several people, making them able and willing to believe in God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. God works in wonderful ways in His providence.

Eventually the boy wakened up. He was a centre of interest in the ward. One of the other patients asked him: "John Three Sixteen, how are you?"

"How did you know my name?" the boy asked.

“Know it, my lad! Why, you have never ceased telling us of it, and I for one say, Blessed John 3:16.”

The boy was surprised that anyone would call him blessed; he could not remember anyone ever caring for him before he was given, as he thought, his new name. He had now heard, for the first time in his life, the words of John 3:16. He repeated the words: “God *so* loved the world”, and he went on, “O but it is beautiful! Not only a home for a night, or such kind folk when one is sick, but a home *always*. I’ll learn every word of it.”

The boy got slowly better. We are told he “came more and more under the influence of the living Word. He did not die, but lived to declare the glory of God, who ‘so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’.”

Luck could do the boy no good, but he received wonderful blessings from God. He is still the same. Ask Him to bless you, especially your soul.

The Five Solas of the Reformation

2. Faith Alone

Rev K M Watkins

This is the second part of a paper given at this year’s Youth Conference. *Sola* is a Latin word that means *alone*. Five essential doctrines of the Bible were at the heart of the Reformation: Scripture alone, faith alone, Christ alone, grace alone, God’s glory alone. All these were and are denied by Roman Catholicism. Last month we saw how Luther came to understand the first of these, Scripture alone, and now we see how he discovered the second.

The second of the Five Solas is *sola fide*, or faith alone – salvation is received by faith alone. No one in the Roman Catholic Church ever told Luther: “Do not believe”. Faith in Christ was always a requirement for salvation in the Church of Rome. But it was not the *only* requirement. It was not *sola fide* – faith *alone*. To get right with God, there were always other things that had to be added to faith. That was put in many ways: faith plus charity, or faith plus good works, or faith plus Rome’s seven sacraments. One thing that never did and never can exist in the Romish system is Justification through faith alone.

Because of Luther’s upbringing under Rome’s teaching, when he read in Romans 1:17 that the gospel revealed the “righteousness of God”, he could not at first think of that in a gospel way, as meaning a God-provided righteousness to be received through faith alone as a gift. Rather, he interpreted it in a legal way, as if the gospel was demanding Luther to produce a right-

eousness of his own by his own works. This made him feel that even the gospel was condemning him, because he could not produce that righteousness.

Luther accepted that he had to believe. But he did not think that believing was the *only* thing he had to do in order to be saved. He thought that he must *also* do good works, attend the mass, go to confession and do everything else that Rome required. Of course, however hard he tried – and he tried very hard – he despairingly came to the bitter realisation that he could not do it. His efforts could never be enough to please a holy God.

His own words, written later, describe the dead-end he reached: “I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery it was I. All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading and other work.”

But the Holy Spirit was leading Luther, and that meant he could not stop struggling to find out what Paul meant in Romans. Luther explained it like this: “I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, ‘the justice of God’, because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust. My situation was that, although an impeccable [faultless] monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage [pacify] Him. Therefore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against Him. Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant.”

At length, the Lord opened Luther’s understanding to see the connection between the two biblical expressions, the “righteousness of God” and “the just shall live by faith”. He wrote: “Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by his faith’. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole Scripture took on a new meaning and whereas, before, the ‘justice of God’ had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.”

So Luther’s own salvation came through understanding the second of the Five Solas – faith alone. He had found the one and only way to be right with God, and it was not by works but by faith. It was not by works *and* faith, but by faith alone. This discovery was vitally important to him personally. Faith alone was the way by which he was saved. Nothing was more important to Luther than this!

After lecturing on Romans, Luther moved on to teach Galatians. In his commentary on it, he could not have asserted faith alone more forcefully. “We must . . . conclude with Paul ‘that we are justified, not by faith furnished with charity, but by faith only and alone’.” “The gospel teaches that the law and works do not justify, but faith alone in Jesus Christ.” “Nothing is required of us but faith alone, whereby we apprehend Christ, and believe that our sins and our death are condemned and abolished in the . . . death of Christ. Thus have we always most certain and sure arguments which necessarily conclude that justification comes by faith alone.”

Justification by faith alone became the watchword of the whole Reformation. Luther rightly said that it is the doctrine by which the whole Church stands or falls. If a church gets this right, it stands. If a church gets this wrong, it falls. The Roman Catholic Church was wrong here, and therefore she had fallen away completely from the true gospel. The Church of the Protestant Reformation was right here, and therefore she stood in the truth of the gospel.

Luther could not have protested more strongly against Rome’s demand for works as well as faith. In his Galatians commentary, he wrote: “Now, the truth of the gospel is, that our righteousness comes by faith alone, without the works of the law.” He contrasted this with Rome’s “corruption of the gospel”, which states “that we are justified by faith, but not without the works of the law.” Adding works to faith like that was what the false apostles did in the days of the New Testament. He accepted that the Roman Catholics “say that we must believe in Christ and that faith is the foundation of our salvation.” But he condemned them for saying that faith justifies only when charity (or love) is added to it. He was right when he said: “This is not the truth of the gospel, but falsehood”.

Luther explained the example of Abraham, the father of those who believe. As is often the case, an illustration makes the truth so clear. He wrote: “Let us come to the Patriarch Abraham himself, and let us see by what means he was justified and saved. Doubtless, not for his excellent virtues and holy works; not because he forsook his country, kindred, and father’s house; not because he was circumcised and observed the law; not because he was about to offer up in sacrifice, at the commandment of God, his son Isaac, in whom he had the promise of posterity; but because he believed. Wherefore he was not justified by any other means than by faith alone.”

Luther, like Paul and Abraham, was justified through faith alone. What about ourselves? Are we trying to do good works in order to get right with God? Are we hoping that God will forgive us because we are trying to do our best? Or have we received salvation and forgiveness by faith alone, as

a free gift? When the Philippian jailor asked what he needed in order to be saved, he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). Believe! Only believe! Would you be saved? Then put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The vital doctrine of the second sola is clearly stated in *The Shorter Catechism*, in its answer to question 33: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and *received by faith alone*".

For Younger Readers

God Kept Them Safe

There were people in Scotland long ago who wanted to worship God in the proper way. They were called Covenanters. But the government did not want them to worship God like that. Soldiers were sent to round them up, but sometimes the soldiers might shoot them and kill them.

One day, some of these Covenanters gathered on the side of a hill to worship God. Someone noticed soldiers not far away. The people were in danger. Their minister was old and he was now weak; so he could not run away.

What could the people do? They decided to pray to God. They asked Him to keep them safe, "to hide them under the covering of His wings" – like a bird would cover its chicks with its wings to keep them safe.

And God heard their prayers. The soldiers were not far away, but thick, white mist soon came rolling over the hills. It covered everything, and the soldiers could no longer see the Covenanters. They did not even see how to get away from the hill.

The Covenanters kept very quiet, so that no one would hear them. But they could hear the soldiers shouting and using bad words, because they did not know which way to go. At last the soldiers found a track and rode away quickly.

Soon the mist cleared away and the sun shone brightly. God had looked after His people. They knew that God had heard their

prayers. They did not suffer any harm. So they wanted to thank Him for being so good to them. They sang psalms to praise God because He saved them from danger.

The Strange Message

Vincente lived in Chile. He was one day down on a beach and found a few pages from a book; they had been washed up among other debris after an earthquake. Vincente picked up the pages and spread them out to dry in the sun. He probably did not have much reading material in his home.

When he sat down to read the pages, he could not understand what they were saying; he found their message the strangest he had ever seen. Yet he read them again and again. As he did so he became more and more interested and, at the same time, more and more confused.

Vincente took the pages home and showed them to a friend. This friend said that they might be part of a book called “the Bible”; he had heard a missionary speaking about it in Santiago not long before then.

Vincente set off for Santiago, the capital of Chile, in the hope of finding the missionary. His search was successful and he showed the missionary the pages that he found so difficult to understand. Yes, the friend was right; they did come from the Bible. The missionary gave Vincente a complete copy of God’s Word, and he began to read it. The result was that God blessed the truths of the Bible to him; they became clear to him because the Holy Spirit shone spiritual light into his soul. Vincente resolved to spend the rest of his life distributing the Word of God in villages in northern Chile where the Scriptures were unknown.

Will God Wipe Away Your Tears?

3. A Place Where There Is No Crying at All

J C Ryle

This is the last part of a tract written by this noted English minister. No doubt it was originally a sermon. It has been edited. The subject of the first section was: There is a place – this world – where there is a great deal of crying. Last month’s section spoke about a place – hell – where there is nothing but 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 third place that I promised to tell you something about. *There is a place where there is no crying at all.* What is this place? It is heaven. It is the place to which all good people go when they are dead. There all is joy and happiness. There no tears are shed. There sorrow and pain, sickness and death can never enter. There can be no crying in heaven, because there is nothing that can cause grief.

There will be no more lessons in heaven; all will have been learned. The school will be closed; the rod and correction will be laid aside for ever. There will be an eternal holiday.

There will be no more work in heaven. Man will no longer need to labour for his bread. The head will no longer ache with thinking; the hands will no longer be stiff and brown with toiling. There will be an eternal rest for the people of God.

There will be no sickness in heaven. Pain, disease, weakness and death will not be known. The people who dwell there shall no more say, "I am sick"; they will be always well. There will be nothing but health and strength for evermore.

There will be no sin in heaven. There will be no bad temper, no unkind words, no spiteful actions. The great tempter, the devil, will not be allowed to come in and spoil the happiness. There shall be nothing but holiness and love for evermore.

Best of all, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will be in the midst of heaven. His people shall at last see Him face to face, and go out from His presence no more. He shall gather His lambs into His bosom, and wipe away all tears from all eyes. There will be fulness of joy where He is, and there shall be pleasures for evermore at His right hand.

Would you not like to go to heaven? We cannot live always in this world. A day will come when we must die, like the old people who have died already. Would you not like to go to heaven when you die? Listen to me, and I will tell you something about the way by which you must go.

If you would go to heaven, you must have your sins forgiven, and your hearts made new and good. There is only One who can do this for you: that One is the Lord Jesus Christ. God has appointed Him to be the Friend of sinners. He can wash away your sins in His own precious blood. He can make your hearts new by putting the Holy Spirit in them. He is the Way to heaven and the Door into heaven. He has the keys in His hand. If you want to go to heaven, you must ask Jesus Christ to let you in.

Ask Jesus in prayer to get ready a place for you in that world where there is no crying. Ask Him to put your name in His book of life and to make you one of His people. Ask Him to cleanse you from all your sins, and to put the

Holy Ghost in your heart. Ask Him to give you power to fight His battle against sin, the world and the devil. Ask Him to give you grace and make you good while you are young, so that you may be safe while you live and happy for ever when you die.

Jesus Christ is ready to do all this, if you will only ask Him. He has done it for many people already. Do not be afraid to ask Him. Tell Him you have heard that He was very kind to people when He was on earth, and ask Him to be kind to you. Remind Him how kind He was to the poor dying thief on the cross. Say to Him: Lord Jesus, remember me; I want to go to heaven. Think upon me; give me the Holy Spirit. Pardon my sins and give me a new heart. Lord Jesus, save me.

And now I have kept my word. I have told you of three places. I have told you of a place where there is nothing but crying; I hope none of you will go there. I have told you of a place where there is no crying; I hope you will all go there. I have told you of a place where there is a great deal of crying; that place is the world in which you are living. Would you like, last of all, to know the best way to be happy in this world? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The happiest people in this world are those who make the Bible the rule of their lives. They read their Bible often. They believe what the Bible says. They love that Saviour, Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible speaks. They try to obey what the Bible commands. No one is so happy as these people. They cannot prevent sickness and trouble coming to them sometimes, but they learn from the Bible to bear these things patiently. If you wish to get through the world happily, make the Bible your best friend.

Shall I tell you a story that I once heard about a little boy and the Bible? Perhaps it will help you to remember what I have just been saying. I want the words I have just written to stick for ever in your minds.

“Father,” said this little boy one day, “I do not see any use in reading the Bible. I do not see that it does people any good.” Little Johnny said this in a rather bad-tempered way, and his father thought it best not to begin reasoning with him.

“Johnny,” he said, “come out, and take a walk with me.” Johnny’s father took him first to a house where there was an old woman who was very poor, and he talked to her about her poverty. “I do not complain,” said the old woman; “I have read in the Bible these words, ‘I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content’.”

“Johnny,” said the little boy’s father, “hear what the old woman says.”

They went on to another house, where there was a young woman who was very ill, and never likely to get better. Johnny’s father asked her if she felt afraid to die. “No,” she said, “I find it written in the Bible, ‘Though I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me'."

"Johnny," said the little boy's father again, "hear what the young woman says."

When Johnny and his father came home that afternoon from their walk, his father asked him one question: "Johnny, do you think it is of any use to read the Bible? Do you think reading the Bible does people any good?"

And now what do you think Johnny said? I will tell you. He held down his head and said nothing. But his face got very red, and he looked very much ashamed. From that day Johnny was never heard again to say, "It is of no use reading the Bible".

Dear young reader, remember my parting words. The way to get through the world with the least possible crying is to read the Bible, to believe the Bible, to pray over the Bible, to live by the Bible.

He that goes through life in this way will have the least crying in this world. And, best of all, he will have *no crying at all in the world to come*.

Repentance

3. Motives

Rev W A Weale

This is the third part of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. Last month's section gave several *encouragements* to repentance.

4. The Motives for Repentance. The Lord Jesus makes it very clear: "Except ye repent, ye shall . . . perish". That is to say: no one who has come to mature age, and who has his reason, will be in heaven if he does not repent.

What are the motives for repentance? We might consider them, both by way of exhortation as well as by way of the benefits. Thomas Boston has a sermon on the words of Christ: "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5). He lists eight motives and we might find it helpful to consider them.

Motive 1. You are to consider *the ways* in which you are obliged to repent. Boston lists four obligations:

(1) *The command of God* obliges you to repent. He then quotes such verses as: "God . . . commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30), and, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezekiel 18:30).

(2) *Your baptism* obligeth you. “Ye have taken on”, says Boston, “the Lord’s badge; how dreadful must it be to continue runaways from your great Master?”

(3) *Your mercies* oblige you; you should be grateful for all God’s mercies.

(4) *Your profession as a Christian* obliges you.

Motive 2. You are to consider seriously **what sin is** – what you are so fond of. Here Boston asks us to consider: (1) every bait has a hook with it; (2) there is no solid rest in a sinful course; (3) sin is a tyrant that can never be satisfied; like the grave, it never says, “It is enough”; (4) a sinful course is most foolish; (5) sin is the separation wall between God and the sinner; (6) what the end of a sinful course will be.

Motive 3. Consider that **you must die**. Here Boston asks a series of questions and follows each with something to consider. He asks, Would you be content to die as you are while you live? He then says, “Consider, what will a sinful life look like on a deathbed?”

He asks, “What will it be to die, and go to another world with a load of guilt on your back that you have not repented of?” He adds, “At a dying hour you must part with the world, and the enjoyment of your lusts. Finally he warns, “There is no repentance in the grave”.

Motive 4. “Take a view of the tribunal of God, before which you must appear. . . . Consider . . . While you are going on in sin, your debt to divine justice is increasing, your accounts are swelling. . . . Though you will not seek them out now to mourn over them and turn from them, they will find you out before the tribunal of God. . . . When Christ will come again, and His throne is set for judgment . . . what will be your thoughts of staving off repentance?” Unrepentant sinners will get a long eternity in which to regret their obstinacy.

Motive 5. “To move you to repentance, consider the sufferings of Christ.” Learn “how dreadful must God’s indignation against sin be, which is written with the blood of Christ, pierced with the sword of justice”. Again: “sin appeared terrible in Sodom when in flames, but yet more terrible on mount Calvary, where the justice of God pursued the Son of God”. Again, consider: “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods [from above or below] drown it”. “Behold” then “how He loved” sinners. Consider also how nature, including the darkness, reacted to Christ’s death, and should you not “mourn for and turn from sin”. “Lastly, did He not suffer enough? Must He suffer more still, even in His state of exaltation? Will you grieve His Spirit, trample on His laws, yea and His blood, continuing impenitent in your sins?”

Motive 6. “Consider the wrong done to God by your sin.” Consider how, by not repenting, you wrong God by setting yourself in opposition to His

nature and will, and wrong Him “by trampling on His laws” “by despising His Son” and “by grieving His Spirit”, as well as by “defacing the remains of His image in your own soul”. Finally there is a call to consider the bad “influence our example has on others”.

Motive 7. “God is calling you to repentance”, and so do not be deaf to (1) the mercies He is daily loading you with, (2) your “crosses and afflictions” and (3) “the preaching of the Word”.

Motive 8. Consider the text: “Except ye repent, ye shall . . . perish.”

Thomas Watson, in chapter 7 of his book, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, lists 16 “powerful motives to repentance”; it may be helpful to list these briefly and compare them with those given by Boston.

(1.) Sorrow and a melting heart will fit us for every holy duty. Watson makes an interesting comparison between melted lead and a melted heart; both are soft and can be shaped acceptably.

(2.) Repentance is highly acceptable to God. (So in Psalm 51:17, “A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice”).

(3.) Repentance commends all our services to God. “The Publican went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

(4.) Without repentance, nothing can be of use to us. “Knowledge without repentance”, says Watson, “will only be a torch to light men’s way to hell.”

(5.) Repenting tears are delicious. “Repentance, though it is bitter in itself, yet it is sweet in its effects.”

(6.) If people repent of great sins, they shall find mercy – “though your sins be as scarlet” (Isaiah 1:18).

(7.) Repentance is the entrance to spiritual blessings. This is seen in Mary Magdalene and how her weeping was rewarded.

(8.) Repentance ushers in temporal blessings. Here Watson refers us to Joel 2:13,19: “Rend your heart, and not your garments . . . the Lord will answer and say unto His people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil”.

(9.) Repentance keeps judgement away from a land (for example, Nineveh).

(10.) Repentance makes joy in heaven (see Luke 15:10).

(11.) Consider how dear our sins cost Christ. “We tasted the apple,” says Watson, “and He tasted the vinegar and the gall.”

(12.) What is the purpose of all the affliction which God sends? “Is it not that these awaken us and make the waters of repentance flow?”

(13.) The days of our mourning will soon be ended, for God will wipe away all tears (Revelation 7:17).

(14.) A happy and glorious reward follows repentance.

(15.) Consider the evil of impenitence.

(16.) Consider that the day of judgement is coming.

Looking Around Us

A Handful of Coins

An 80-year-old woman who was to fly from a Shanghai airport was anxious to have a safe flight. So Mrs Qiu threw a handful of coins at the China Southern Airlines plane she was about to board. She told police she flung the coins at one of the plane's engines for good luck, as she "prayed for safety".

How her offering of coins could bring any benefit is not explained, but that is the nature of superstition; other examples are to touch wood or cross one's fingers. There is no connection between the action and the outcome the person wishes to see. To "touch wood" does not make a danger any less likely. To cross one's fingers does not make what is desired any more likely.

Of the nine coins the woman threw, only one – worth about 20 pence – hit its target. What did happen was that the 150 passengers had to leave the plane and were delayed for several hours while a maintenance crew made a full examination of the plane's engine. And the woman was taken away and questioned by police.

A coin in an aircraft engine is very likely to cause damage and put the passengers and crew in danger; it certainly will not bring luck. In any case, luck should have no place in our thinking; it has no reality. What does exist is God's blessing; that is what we should seek.

If we are to seek a blessing, we must seek it from the true God, not from the god, or gods, of a false religion, and Mrs Qiu is a Buddhist. To pray to any being other than the living God – the One who created everything that exists, "the heavens and the earth" – is to do something that will do nothing to help bring about what one wants.

It is different if we pray to the God who really exists; He can answer our prayers. He can help us and preserve us from danger. But what right have we to expect help from Him? While God has the right to give or not give what we ask, we ought to respect His sovereignty – His right to rule as He pleases.

God encourages us to come to Him in prayer. By doing so, we show respect for His authority over all things. We are to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and sinners. He died so that those who believe on Him may have the greatest of all blessings: salvation from sin and from all its consequences.

All other blessings are secondary – we are to "seek . . . *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all [other] things shall be added" (Matthew 6:33). That is God's order: spiritual blessings first; they are most important – and other things afterwards. But let us beware of superstition and false religion of every kind.

The Burdened Sinner

Ah, what can I do,
Or where be secure?
If justice pursue,
What heart can endure?
The heart breaks asunder
Though hard as a stone,
When God speaks in thunder
And makes Himself known.

With terror I read
My sins' heavy score;
The number exceeds
The sands on the shore;
Guilt makes me unable
To stand or to flee;
So Cain murdered Abel
And trembled like me.

Each sin, like his blood,
With a terrible cry,
Calls loudly on God
To strike from on high;
Nor can my repentance
Extorted by fear,
Reverse the just sentence;
'Tis just, though severe.

The case is too plain;
I have my own choice;
Again, and again,
I slighted His voice;
His warnings neglected,
His patience abused,
His gospel rejected,
His mercy refused.

And must I then go,
For ever to dwell
In torments and woe
With devils in hell?
O where is the Saviour
I scorned in times past?
His word in my favour
Would save me at last.

Lord Jesus, on Thee
I venture to call,
O look upon me,
The vilest of all!
For whom didst Thou languish
And bleed on the tree?
O pity my anguish,
And say, "'Twas for thee".

A case such as mine
Will honour Thy power
All hell will repine,
All heav'n will adore.
If in condemnation,
Strict justice takes place,
It shines in salvation
More glorious through grace.

John Newton

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