

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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A Holy Ambition

If you are travelling along the main road through the Isle of Harris, you might turn off into the little village of Northton. You might then follow the straight road through the village, with houses scattered on each side of it. Then, almost at the end of the road, you might turn left and very quickly reach a lovely sandy beach, from where you can look out on some of the array of beautiful islands in the Sound of Harris.

In one of these houses there lived, until his death in 1994, a godly man named Angus MacCuish. Angus had spent his working life as a lighthouse keeper, keeping the lights burning in dangerous places so that ships could escape being wrecked on rocks but pass safely on their way through the sea. One of his postings was Out Skerries, possibly the most remote part of Scotland; it is one of the Shetland Islands. It was from this island that Angus took his wife Ina.

One evening he was speaking to a group of people in Northton, among whom were a few children. Perhaps it was because of the children present that Angus said, "I have an ambition". Then he explained what his ambition was: "I want to get out of this world with clean feet". What did he mean?

Think of someone walking along a path; it is wet; so the path is muddy. Unless the person walks along very carefully – perhaps stepping from stone to stone – he or she will end up with dirty feet.

But Angus was using this idea to illustrate a spiritual idea. As we walk through this world, it is very easy to become dirty through coming in contact with sin. As we come in contact with temptation, we may fall into some serious sin; and sin makes people spiritually filthy. If we were perfectly established in holiness, temptation could do us no harm. But our hearts are deceitful and we can very easily be attracted to sin and fall into it.

Angus knew perfectly well that he was a sinner – that he was sinning continually because he was not loving God with *all* his heart, which is what God demands. But what he was specially afraid of was some serious outward sin that other people could see. His feet would then be dirty and everybody would see it. Most serious of all, God would see it.

But if other people could see that he had dirty feet, that he had sinned seriously, it would cause further dishonour to God, beyond the dishonour caused by the actual sin. These other people might then think that there was no such thing as real godliness to be found anywhere. So after David sinned so seriously, Nathan the prophet told him: "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Samuel 12:14). David no longer had clean feet, and the result was that some people who hated God found an opportunity to say wicked things about Him. And they would have been less likely to entrust their souls to Him and to want to have clean feet themselves.

In so many ways, David damaged the reputation of true believers by his sin; people would then have been more likely to treat them all as a bunch of hypocrites. And God's enemies would have found it easier to deny that God had the power to watch over His people and keep them from sin.

Angus would not have wanted people to speak about him as someone with dirty feet, as someone who had done something obviously sinful. But he loved God; he had the fear of God in his heart – in other words, he did not want to offend God by breaking His commandments. He wanted never, until he died, to do what would offend God. And he did not want to do anything that would give people the opportunity to say bad things about God.

How can we keep our feet clean? How can we avoid offending God by our sin? This is something we cannot do by our own power, though we have a real responsibility to resist temptation and do what is right. If we are to have clean feet, we must have a clean heart; and it is God who must give us a clean heart. We must ask God to do so, for Jesus' sake.

We must be dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ for the whole work of salvation and for every part of it – for forgiveness of sin as well as a clean heart and a holy life. So God calls on us to look to Christ Jesus as the Saviour who came into the world to deliver people from the guilt and the power of sin and from all its consequences. He says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). In other words, we are to believe on Christ Jesus – to receive God's testimony about Him in the Scriptures and to trust in Him for a complete salvation.

It is part of God's saving work in the lives of sinners that the Holy Spirit creates in them a clean heart. This is a heart where sin is no longer the reigning power. So those who have a clean heart now have sincere desires for holiness; they want to keep God's commandments; they truly fear God. They may never speak about an ambition to get through this world with clean feet but, when they think about it, that is what they really want. And

they know that it is God alone that can keep their feet clean, that can keep them from falling into serious sin.

The Bible does not actually use the expression, *clean feet*, though its meaning is absolutely scriptural. Yet it does speak about “clean hands” – for instance, in Psalm 24:4. David, the writer of this Psalm, had asked the question, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place?” In other words, who can come into the presence of this holy God? Especially the question is, Who have a right to come into God’s holy place in heaven?

David’s answer was: “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart”. These two matters go together: (1) having clean hands – that is, doing things in a right way – and (2) having a clean heart. What is more, those who have clean hands also have clean feet. Such people want to obey God in everything they do – not only in what other people can see but in their thinking, which no one else can see. And when they die, they will be brought to God’s holy place in heaven. There they will have a heart that is perfectly pure and clean, and they will for ever serve God perfectly in everything they do.

Yes, David got his feet really dirty. But God was very merciful to him and forgave him his sin. God cleansed him and at last made him perfectly holy. Then God brought him to heaven. But let no one presume on God’s mercy when they allow themselves to be tempted into sin. What their sin may show is that they were never truly a child of God.

That evening in Northton over 20 years ago, Angus MacCuish spoke of his ambition to get out of this world with clean feet. And God gave him his wish. He did not live long afterwards, but no one ever heard of Angus committing sin. Of course, he was not free from sin until the moment when he left this world and was received into heaven. But his was not the kind of sin that other people could notice. Everyone in his village and beyond knew him to be a godly man.

His was a godly ambition. And may that ambition be ours! Yes, God, for Christ’s sake, is able to cleanse our hearts, and we must therefore pray earnestly that God would create in us a clean heart, that we would find Christ for ourselves as the Saviour of sinners, and that we would be brought at last to that place where everything and everyone is perfectly clean.

And if God will graciously answer our prayers, He is able to keep our feet clean through the rest of our journey through this world. But we must keep asking the Lord to keep us clean as long as we are in danger of meeting the varied temptations that lurk around us in our way through this world. In prayer we may use David’s words, “Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me” (Psalm 25:4,5).

Justification

4. God Pardoning Sin

Rev Roderick Macleod

Last month's part of this Youth Conference paper was about the greatness of the heart of God acting in a way of free grace in justifying sinners; it is God dealing with those who are unworthy of His favour. He is not obliged to justify any sinner.

In this section we shall look at one of the ways in which the love and kindness of God goes out to guilt-laden sinners in justifying them. In the words of *The Shorter Catechism*, God "pardoneth all our iniquities". Here there is (1.) God's act: the pardon of sins; and (2.) the extent of that act: all our sins.

1. God's act. (1) *What right do we have to be pardoned?* No right whatever. To sin in the sight of God's holiness is an outrage against all that is good, but that describes every sin we have ever committed! Sin boldly challenges the God of infinite holiness and justice to cast the sinner into hell, but that is what our sins do every day! It is wickedness in a creature to defy his glorious Maker's authority to give laws to His creatures, but that is what every sin does! Those laden with the guilt of sin have no right to the goodness of God; they may, without a moment's notice, fall into the hands of offended holiness and avenging justice. If God pardons our sins, it is an act of sheer grace.

(2) *What is the general idea behind the words, "pardoneth all our sins"?* We use the word *pardon* here in a general sense as meaning the same as *forgiveness*. The Bible uses various words when speaking about sin being pardoned. When God pardons sin He is said to *blot it out*: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee" (Is 44:22).

An ancient way of writing was with a stylus on wax tablets. The soft wax meant that mistakes could be easily blotted out without trace and written over. This helps us to understand David's cry: "According unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. . . . Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities" (Ps 51:1,9). It sheds light on what God says about pardon in Isaiah 43:25: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins". Paul speaks of handwritten accusations against us being wiped away, or blotted out by the beloved Saviour: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Col 2:14).

Psalm 32:1,2 is interesting because three different words are used to describe the pardon of sins. "Blessed is he whose transgression is *forgiven*,

whose sin is *covered*. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord *imputeth not* iniquity.”

Forgiven. The word translated *forgive* means to take away, to bear, or to carry away. Christ Jesus, the gracious Lord, took up and carried away more than a wooden cross, for it is recorded that “He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull” (John 19:17). He lifted up and bore away the guilt of His people’s sins to the tribunal of God – not to accuse them there but to answer for them.

Covered. The word that is translated *covered* refers to putting things out of sight so that they cannot be seen. In forgiveness, God covers sin in a sea of blood. No sea can hide sin from the all-seeing eye of God’s justice but a sea of blood. It is true that the blood of a mere creature cannot hide sin, but the sea of the blood of Jesus Christ can and does. That is where God casts sin when He covers it. “Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).

Not imputing. To *impute* is to charge something to someone’s account. The law condemns us because of our sins and, by an act of infinite justice, charges disobedience to our account, in readiness for the judgement of the great white throne. Thus we heap up wrath against the day of wrath. But when God justifies a sinner, He takes away the charges of guilt from his account and places them on the account of the Lord Jesus Christ instead. This Friend of sinners makes these charges His own, and answers for them by pouring out His soul unto death. In His love, He received the strokes of avenging justice, which were due to those for whom He suffers.

So when we pray for pardon:

- we confess that the laying of charges against us is holy, just and good and we ask, for Jesus Christ’s sake, that they would not be imputed to us but would be blotted out;
- we confess, with grief and hatred of our sins, that they are a breach of God’s law, and looking by faith to the death of the glorious Substitute, we ask for forgiveness;
- we mourn that our sins are offensive to God’s holiness and ask that they would be covered by the blood of Christ.

(3) *What did it cost to purchase pardon for sinners?* The pardon of sin has been purchased at a great price. The fact that God pardons sin is a wonder, so great that nothing in the universe can be compared to it. The broad heavens are astoundingly vast, but in the pardon of sin there is a vastness of grace; it is so much greater that it cannot be measured, for “over all His other works His tender mercies are” (Psalm 145:9).

The most wonderful aspect of pardon is the price that was paid by Jesus

Christ to purchase it. The suffering in His broken body, His broken heart and His poured-out soul is the place where God's hatred of sin is displayed most clearly. In that most awful suffering is seen the heavy price that was paid to purchase the forgiveness of sins.

2. The extent of God's pardon. (1) When God justifies a sinner He "*pardoneth all [his] sins*". David understood this when he wrote of justification as an act of God: "who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities" (Psalm 103:3). Past sins are pardoned freely, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). Future sins will not be imputed: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:8). When we say that future sins will not be imputed, we mean that God as a Judge will not charge the sins of justified people against them; these people will not come under condemnation again (Rom 8:1). It is true that God, as a loving father, chastens justified people for their sins, for their good; but God will never punish them as a Judge. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb 12:6).

(2) If all their sins are pardoned, *why do justified people continue to ask for pardon*? Every true believer rejoices that justification takes away the guilt of sin and that he stands clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But he also knows, to his grief, that justification does not remove the presence of sin in his heart. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). So believers ask God to pardon their sins.

To ask for pardon earnestly and sincerely is the daily practice of justified, converted people. Is it strange that a loving child, grieved that he has offended a loving father, would ask his father to pardon his bad conduct? Viewed in this light, a believer asking for pardon is much the same as him confessing his sins with sorrow of heart and pleading with God as a father: "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12). Conscious that, as a general rule, nothing but their sin is the cause of God denying them the joy of salvation, they pray, "Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Psalm 25:11).

Application. David was watering a free and gracious pardon with the tears of a heart broken for his sins when he said:

"I will confess unto the Lord my trespasses, said I,
And of my sin Thou freely didst forgive the iniquity."

(Metrical Psalm 32:5)

If your sins are not yet forgiven, do not stop seeking the Lord until, by His grace, you use David's words. God says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7).

Old Saunders

A city missionary visited an old man known as Saunders. When the missionary went in, he found Saunders sitting by the fire, which was almost out. Beside him, on a small table, lay an old, well-worn Bible.

Saunders had been reading his Bible, but he was crying. “All is quiet now”, he said, pointing to the bed, on which lay a coffin, containing the remains of his wife who had died not long before. He told the missionary about the “sore struggle” that she had before she died and said that he would now be “a lonely old man”. They “had lived together 45 years and had peace and comfort in each other”.

Then the old man went on, still weeping: “I don’t know what is to come of me now”. He confessed that he could not look after the house and asked, “What will I do?”

The missionary described Saunders’ attitude as “a momentary weakness”, and he believed he knew the cure for this weakness. “Jesus lives!” he told Saunders. His wife may have died, but Jesus, his Saviour had not. Jesus was alive and ruling over everything that happens.

“O sinful creature that I am,” Saunders answered, explaining that there were times when “I lose sight of that blessed truth!” Having been reminded that Jesus was alive, and realising that his Saviour was still watching over him, Saunders began to count the promises of God to His people and to comment on them.

The missionary spoke of seeing the old man “now raising his eyes to heaven . . . now looking towards his wife’s coffin, and then raising them to heaven again”. He could hear Saunders calmly and reverently addressing God in heaven, then speaking sadly of his wife and his loss, now that she had died, and then exhorting himself to patience. He found all this most moving, “but most delightful”.

Yes, it should be very attractive to see a godly man or woman showing evidence that spiritual life is active in their soul. This is how it was with Saunders. He felt the loss of his wife – and that was right – God’s children are not robots, with no feelings. At the same time, he knew that God was ruling in heaven over everything that happened in this world. Especially he knew that God was ruling over everything that had happened to himself, and he knew to bring all his needs before God in prayer. So we are encouraged that Christ is a high priest who can “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15,16).

Challenges in a Godless World

6. A Futile Challenge

Matthew Vogan

Last month's section of this Youth Conference paper spoke of the uncompromising challenge we face today from secularism. Secularism will not compromise, rather it expects the Church to do so. But it is only Christ who can decide the Church's beliefs, worship and practice. It needs to turn to Scripture alone for this.

All that we have considered so far in relation to the challenges facing the Church in a godless society might seem rather gloomy. We might be tempted to think that this constant, total, subtle challenge is unstoppable but in fact it contains the seeds of its own destruction. Such moral lawlessness and the absence of shared values cannot provide any society with sufficient stability. It is empty and only results in emptiness.

It is now clear that even the various agendas of personal liberation, that make such wholesale demands in society, can contradict each other. Transgenderism, for instance, contradicts the feminist agenda, which is based on opposition between the sexes; so some feminists think that male transitioning to female is just another exercise of "male privilege". The transgender movement subverts some of the key agendas of secularism, such as materialism, which would reduce everything to biological processes.

The driving force in our culture has been moral relativism. This is the idea that there are no absolute moral values – that these values are determined by the culture or the individual. This is because it seems to allow everyone to hold their own values and pursue them with equal freedom. This is a worthless principle, it is also contradictory. It needs to assert an absolute – that there are no absolutes. One book describes it well: *Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*. It is not in fact something that anyone can live with consistently. To hold it with consistency would mean that you could not say that the Holocaust was evil, even though everyone knows instinctively in his or her conscience that it was. Other terrible events today, whether terrorist attacks or fearful and heartbreaking cruelty to children, need to be condemned as truly evil, not just because that is what we feel, but because it is absolutely true. There is, in fact, plenty of moral outrage in the world in spite of the idea of moral relativism. This shows that moral relativism is not something that we can live with in a consistent way.

No society can function with this type of entire breakdown in its necessary and ordained order. We are destined for as much disorder as is possible unless we will submit to God's rule. Scripture assures us that no one can fight against God. It is solemn to observe that the reason our culture has arrived at such

darkening of their foolish heart and vain imaginations is that they have been given over to it in judgement (Romans 1:21). As Psalm 2 shows, secular humanism imagines a vain thing against the Most High and His Anointed. They say, "Let us break Their bands asunder and cast away Their cords from us". Is God concerned or troubled? No. "He that in heaven sits shall laugh; the Lord shall scorn them all (Psalm 2:4, metrical).

Their little efforts are futile. They are really like a toddler who thinks that they will knock their father down in their rage, running at him with all their might. In the end it is only something to find laughable, because it is so futile.

The book of Proverbs tells us that, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered" (Proverbs 11:21). Though the evolutionist joins hands with the journalist, who joins hands with the homosexual activist, who joins hands with the politician – the wicked shall not go unpunished. Nations will be punished in this world and individuals in the next.

The Church must not become anxious and despairing. Rather, they must put their trust in the Lord and await His time. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" (Psalm 37:7). It is interesting that this command, "Fret not thyself", is repeated three times in that Psalm and appears also in a separate verse (Proverbs 24:19). David Dickson notes that the temptation to fretting "is very pressing, when we see the wicked get so much of their will, so much of their purpose brought to pass: so we have need to be pressed again and again to resist this temptation".

To give way to a fretting spirit would also weaken the hands of the Church in its great work. Christ gave His commission to the Church to teach people to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded and to make disciples of all nations, making known the gospel of grace. The great duties of the Church in such a generation are, on the one hand, to be holding fast what we have received in Scripture and, on the other hand, to be patiently sowing the seed of God's truth. Scripture often speaks of the need to hold fast in times of great opposition. We read about this in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the letters to the seven Churches of Asia in Revelation 2-3. Indeed, to those in Thyatira, Christ says, "I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Revelation 2:24-25). Holding fast assumes constant perseverance and giving our utmost to maintaining what we have. It is faithfully keeping Christ's charge and the word of His patience.

The Church must also be patiently sowing the seed of God's truth. We are to have faith in God's truth and His power to make it fruitful. There are

strong winds of opposition that buffet the Church in a dark and cloudy day of blasphemy and rebuke but this must not alter our course. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4). "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good" (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

"Blessed Are the Meek"

It was a beautiful sunny day in early summer in a wide valley in the south of Scotland. But in a poor cottage by the river, a ruined human being was coming to an end of his life in this world, and there was no hope to lighten the gloom. He was the owner of all the lovely landscape around the cottage. From there one could see the family home, among majestic trees, yet the man could make no use of its comforts.

Some months before, when he was riding home from a drunken party, he had been thrown from his horse at the cottage gate. He was so badly injured that he could not be removed from the lowly bed where he had first been laid. To attempt to do so, the doctors said, would result in instant death. It was a marvel to everyone that he had survived so long. But God's longsuffering brought about no softening or repentance in the injured man. As he had been during his life, so he remained to the last – a hardened sinner, cursing other people and defying God. It was a sad duty for his wife and servants to care for him and listen to the evil tongue of a man who could not move any other part of his body.

The landowner had used his inheritance in the service of sin, and not for God's glory. His abundant inheritance of this world's goods had never once satisfied his soul; his situation now showed that "riches profit not in the day of wrath". His wealth brought him a curse instead of a blessing; only where there is God's blessing is no sorrow added. And "such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth, and they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off".

The same summer sunshine was lighting up another cottage, on the edge of a small village on the landowner's property. There was but one small room in the house where old Jenny Holmes and her sister lived. The roof was low, and the room was draughty. The one small window was near Jenny's bed, where she spent the whole day every day. She prized the two or three flowering pot plants sitting in the window.

Jenny had lain in that bed for 20 long years, and she knew she would lie there till her Father in heaven told her, Come up hither. Every joint in her

body was distorted and crippled with rheumatism, and the severe pain often caused her to faint. But no one ever heard her murmur; and no one would have known how great and constant her sufferings were unless her sister had spoken about them. Jenny’s manner revealed the deep, perfect peace of one whose mind was stayed on God. She praised Him all the day long for His goodness to her, goodness that she knew she did not deserve. She never had much more than bread and water, but she spoke as one whose cup had always been filled to overflowing, as one whom goodness and mercy had followed all the days of her life.

She was a shepherd’s daughter and, when she was young, her Bible and her knitting were her only companions in the green hollows where she herded the cows or watched the sheep. But the Lord had said to her: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). God gave her a new nature, and she became a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And as she was a child of God, she was an heir, a joint heir with Christ.

At that time “all things became new”, and from then on she never lacked any good thing. True, she bore many kinds of trouble; but through them, her Father had made her will subject to His. She was meek under His dealings, for she learned not to quarrel with any of them and tasted the blessedness of true meekness. She knew she was experiencing what God’s fatherly wisdom and love had assigned to her. She knew too that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared” for her in the future.

Whatever she got was given with a Father’s blessing, whether it was a cup of medicine or some tasty food. The peace which passes all understanding kept her heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

Her nights were times of distressing pain and sleeplessness, but she used to say, “He gives me songs in the night. He so satisfies me with views of Himself and of His good will and gracious ways that I must sing with gladness of heart.” A thankful heart is always a happy, praising heart, and so it is a meek and lowly one.

Jenny took great delight in every simple pleasure her neighbours and friends brought within her reach: a handful of flowers, a few cuttings from which she could rear little plants to give to those who were kind to her, a book, a tract or a small amount of nice food. It was worthwhile bringing her such things to see the real pleasure they gave her.

Truly Jenny Holmes, with all her poverty, sickness and suffering, was blessed. Poor in her own eyes, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, she had laid down the weapons of rebellion, and submitted herself to the

righteousness of God. She had accepted Him as her portion, and her great desire was to do and suffer whatever was His will for her. So she tasted and saw that God is good, and that "blessed are all they that put their trust in Him". She was meek and lowly in heart, and all things worked together for her good. Crippled, suffering Jenny Holmes will take her place among the white-robed multitude who "came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Lamb".

"A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. . . . For such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off. . . . Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it" (Psalm 37:16,10,11,22,34).

Abridged from *The Family Treasury*

For Younger Readers

The Soldier and His Horse

One day a general in the army, a very important man, was walking about. He found a soldier with a horse and cart. The cart had a heavy load. The cart was stuck somewhere. It was too much for the horse to pull the cart out.

So what did the soldier do? He took his whip and started whipping the horse. But it did no good. The cart was still stuck where it was. The soldier was very cruel.

But what did the general do when he saw what was happening? He went behind the horse and stood behind the wheel that was stuck. He put his shoulder against the wheel and pushed hard. Then the cart started to move. The General was kind.

He told the soldier that, if he would help the horse instead of beating it, he would get on better. The Bible tells us to be kind to our animals.

The soldier wanted to know who the man was. But the general would not tell him. He just told the soldier that he would find out later, when he got back to his base.

When the soldier got back to his base, he found out who had

helped him. He was very much afraid of how the General would punish him now, and he was really ashamed of how he treated the horse.

You do many things that are wrong. For one thing, you do not always obey your parents. You should always remember that God sees you wherever you are and whatever you are doing.

Ask Him to keep you from doing what is wrong. Ask Him to help you to do what your parents tell you. And ask Him to keep you from being cruel.

For Junior Readers

The Great Substitute

Do you remember hearing about the terrorist gunman in France who went on a shooting spree in March? He hijacked a car, shot the owner, and then drove the car to a supermarket. There he shot two people and took some hostages. The French police arrived and tried to clear people out of the shop.

Although the police succeeded in getting some people out, the gunman still held several hostages. Then one of the policemen did a very brave thing. He offered to take the place of a female hostage if the gunman would release her. So the woman went free and the policeman was kept as a hostage in her place. But in the shooting that followed, this brave man was shot and he died soon afterwards. So in saving the life of someone else he lost his own life. He took her place; he died as a substitute.

As you can imagine, his action made headlines in all the news reports. He was praised around the world. He was called a hero. His self-sacrifice and courage won the respect of his whole nation; everyone admired him. The French police praised the sacrifice of this man who gave his life so that a hostage might go free. His action was indeed admirable and was appreciated.

What does this story make you think of? Who gave his life as a sacrifice so that guilty sinners could go free? Perhaps you could get your Bible out and look up some verses to help you:

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh” (1 Peter 3:18).

“Even the Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

“Who gave Himself for us” (Titus 2:14).

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . . He was buried, and . . . He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Is that not wonderful? That Christ Jesus, the holy, sinless Son of God, should come down to this sinful world and suffer a cruel and painful death, suffer the punishment that sinners deserve, so that they can go free! But He is not a dead Saviour. He rose again from the dead and lives for ever.

Yes, the French policeman did something wonderful. But what Christ Jesus did was much more wonderful. He is God, and He came very low into our sinful world, so that He might die for those who were rebels against God.

Is this not good news? Yet the world takes no notice of Christ's sacrifice. What about you? You read about it in your Bible; you hear ministers preach about it; but do you believe it? It is indeed “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. Will you not pray that God would give you faith to believe on this wonderful Saviour who died as a substitute for sinners like you? *J van Kralingen*

What the Bible Says About Itself

5. Prophecies About Christ

Charles Hodge

February's article spoke again about the spiritual grasp we must have of the truths we find in the Bible. It also spoke about how serious the sin of unbelief is. This series is taken, with editing, from *The Way of Life*.

Jews and Christians have the writings of the Old Testament, which were produced by the prophets. Jews and Christians have them now; the Jews had them in the time of Christ. The Israelites in Judea and everywhere else acknowledged them then.

They can be traced back into history for centuries before Christ came. Three hundred years before then, they were translated into Greek and circulated widely. They contain the history, laws and other writings of the people of Judea, whose existence and distinctive features are as well known as those of any people in the world. It was because of these holy books that the Jews were what they were. Here we have a basis for an argument for the truth of Christianity, one which cannot be resisted.

In these old writings, preserved in the hands of those who became open enemies of Christ, we find the coming of a deliverer clearly foretold.

Immediately after the Fall of man, God revealed that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. This prediction is the germ of all the later prophecies. Later predictions gradually revealed who the promised seed was to be, and how He was to destroy the power of evil.

It was first made known that the Redeemer should belong to the race of Shem (Genesis 9:26). Then that He should be of the seed of Abraham, who was promised: "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Then that He should be from the tribe of Judah, of whom it was foretold: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and to Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10). Later it was revealed that He was to come through the line of David: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding . . . the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:1,2).

It was foretold that the Redeemer would come after a special messenger had appeared: "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Malachi 3:1). (The special messenger was to be John the Baptist.)

The time, the manner, and the place of His birth were all predicted. As to the time, Daniel said, "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" (Daniel 9:25). As to the miraculous manner of His birth, Isaiah said, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). As to the place, Micah said, "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2).

This Deliverer was to be a poor man: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion . . . behold, thy king cometh unto thee . . . lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9). He was to be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3), and yet He was "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14) – that is, God with us. He was to be "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6); His name was to be: "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

This Redeemer was to be a *Prophet*, a Divine Teacher. "The Lord thy God", said Moses, "will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee,

of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15). God says, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1). And Christ said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isaiah 61:1).

He was also to be a *Priest*. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). "He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne" (Zechariah 6:13).

That this Redeemer is a *King* is set forth in many prophecies. God said of the Messiah: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6). "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psalm 45:6,7). "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isaiah 9:6,7).

The features of the Messiah's kingdom were also clearly predicted. It was to be spiritual, in distinction from the more outward state of religion in Old Testament times, with all its ceremonies. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:31,33). Hence the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is so often mentioned in connection with the promised Redeemer: "I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28).

Again, this kingdom was not to be confined to the Jews, but was to include all the world. As early as the book of Genesis, it was declared that all nations would obey Shiloh, and that all the nations would be blessed in Abraham and his seed. God promised the Messiah the heathen for His inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession. And He said, "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

Looking Around Us

When to Die?

David Goodall has died, at the age of 104. It was very sad. But it is not just the fact of death that made it sad; it is the fact that *he* chose to bring his life to an end. He did so recently in Switzerland.

Goodall was a very successful scientist. Among his achievements, even in recent years, was to edit a series of 30 books called *Ecosystems of the World*. But he felt recently that his quality of life was not as good as it once was, and it was getting worse. No doubt that was true, but he was not seriously ill. In any case he had no right to decide to die; we ought to leave the time of our death in God's hands and we should be content with whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

Certainly our circumstances may not be easy and this may be particularly true for those who are becoming older – or who are seriously ill, whatever their age. Yet in illness or danger of any kind, we may always bring our needs before God in prayer. That is what He encourages us to do. But no one has the right to take away their own life or ask anyone to help them do so.

Goodall claimed to be “happy to end” his life. He said that his life had been “rather poor for the past year or so”. He had flown from Australia to Switzerland for his assisted suicide at a clinic in Basel. He was supplied with a drug there; he swallowed it and, soon, his long life was over.

We must realise that death is not the end of our existence. Far from it; we will exist for ever – either in heaven or, solemnly, in hell, experiencing the just punishment for all the sins committed in this world.

Clearly then we need to be prepared for eternity. We need our sins to be taken out of the way, so that we may be accepted into heaven. One thing should be clear: we cannot remove the guilt of our own sins; we need a substitute. And that substitute can be no mere man; it cannot even be an angel. No created being could endure the punishment of sin in a limited period of time, however long that period might be.

The substitute must be the Son of God. Yet if He was to become a substitute for human beings, He must Himself become a man. Which is what He did in infinite kindness to sinners, none of whom could possibly be, in the least degree, worthy of such kindness.

If you are still unconverted, you should be very thankful to be still spared in this life, to have a further opportunity of finding salvation for your soul. See that you make good use of your opportunities. But, however difficult life may be, it is dangerous to throw it away. On the other hand, believers are content to submit to God's will as to the time of their death.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2017-18

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