

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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**Cover Picture:** In the Matopos national park, Zimbabwe. See page 68.

## The Young People's Magazine

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# The Young People's Magazine

Volume 84

April 2019

Number 4

## Springtime

Spring is in the air as I write. Beautiful bunches of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils have pushed through the ground and are opening up. It happens year after year with unfailing regularity. In these flowers, we should recognise the results of God's work in creating all things. Even in a world which has been marred by sin, we can still see wonderful things that God designed and made. And we should worship Him for such great gifts to an unworthy world – unworthy of the smallest of His gifts because of sin.

These spring flowers come up year after year, and they do so without any human activity – apart from planting them in the first place. No human being can create a flower; so it is surely absurd to think of a flower coming into existence by a random succession of unplanned changes, with no one in control of what is happening. It is God who designed flowers in His infinite wisdom; beautiful things do not come about by accident.

As spring advances, we can expect longer daylight and greater warmth from the sun as it rises higher in the sky. We welcome these things, and we should see them as God's gifts. It is He who has promised that, "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). Yet that promise does not prevent drought and famine; God may change "a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein" (Psalm 107:34).

How sad it is when a country changes that was once spiritually fruitful, where lots of people were following Christ and living godly lives – when it no longer brings forth spiritual fruit! People then despise the godly ways of the previous generation; they no longer feel the authority of God's Word; they reject the call of the gospel to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then God may leave them to themselves, and what was once a fruitful land becomes spiritually barren. You can describe it as a spiritual winter, where everything is cold and there is no rain, no showers of the Holy Spirit.

But a time may come when God, in His mercy, turns "the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings" (Psalm 107:35) – when He sends great showers of blessing, when He pours out the Holy Spirit on

some part of the world. What an outpouring of the Holy Spirit there was on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem! Christ's disciples scattered the good seed of Scripture truth as they preached the Word of God. The conditions were altogether favourable to spiritual growth, and very quickly there was a rich spiritual harvest.

This is what has happened many times in the history of the Christian Church. For example, John Sutherland was the minister of Golspie in the north of Scotland in the 1700s. He visited Kilsyth and Cambuslang in central Scotland, at a time when there were showers of spiritual blessing and many were turned from their own sinful ways to serve the living God. He saw the evidences of a spiritual springtime in these places and, no doubt, he was very glad to see them. We can be sure that he praised God for the wonderful things he had seen.

When John Sutherland reached home again, he told his people what he had seen and heard and persuaded the few godly people in the district to hold prayer meetings in the villages where they lived. He wanted them to plead for a spiritual awakening. God heard their prayers and a work of grace went on slowly and steadily in this small parish. During the next nine months, 70 people came to their minister asking, "What must we do to be saved?"

This work went on for years and also affected the next parish, of Rogart. Angus MacGillivray, a minister who wrote about this revival in a book which has been reprinted with the title, *Revivals in the Highlands*, said, "The result was a large number of solid, enlightened Christian people, in whose daily walk the image of Christ was seen – living 'epistles [of Christ] known and read of all men'".

MacGillivray also wrote about the parish of Tongue, on the North coast of Scotland. William Mackenzie was minister there for 65 years from 1769. He found the people kind to him but they were careless about their souls, ignorant of the truths of God's Word, and worldly. The third service on Sabbaths was in Gaelic, but the young people slipped out of church before it started. Mackenzie was upset, but he did not at first know what was going on outside while he conducted this last service of the day. But he soon found out: the young people spent their time chatting and behaving in ways that showed no regard for the holiness of God's day.

As the young people rushed out of the church the next Sabbath he called them back, with authority in his voice; he told them he had something to say to them. They all obeyed and sat in breathless silence while he addressed them thus: "I came to this parish four years ago", when *everyone* had agreed to call him. "I had then the impression that I had God's call too. But I fear I have been mistaken. I am doing no good among you; the gospel is making

no impression on you. What is worse, you are hardening under it. Instead of receiving it, you flee from it and leave God's house on His own day to buy and sell in the churchyard. I trust the Lord will remove me to some other place where I shall not be utterly useless, as I am here."

Then the minister burst into tears, sat down in the pulpit and went on crying for the next five minutes. Then he managed to control his feelings and went on to preach to the people. But that day was the beginning of better things in Tongue. A springtime followed these depths of spiritual winter, which had so disturbed this godly minister. Indeed, for several years afterwards, he never preached on a Sabbath without some of his people coming to him the next week under conviction of sin – sometimes up to eight of them. It was a long summer of gospel blessing.

MacGillivray asked Mackenzie what seemed most to impress the people in his preaching. He said it was the dying love of Christ, and this love pointed to their sin in despising and rejecting it, which made them feel condemned before God. He was preaching the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit was powerfully applying to sinners the truths he was declaring. God was making it clear that Mackenzie was indeed in the right place.

Finally we should ask ourselves if we have experienced a spiritual springtime in our souls. Or are we still experiencing a spiritual winter of sin and unbelief? Has Christ, the Sun of righteousness begun to shine into our hearts, and has the Holy Spirit come to us in showers of spiritual blessing?

Actually when John Sutherland came to Golspie, he was still unconverted; it was still winter in his soul. And the old Christians in the district felt that there was something missing in his preaching; they were not hearing the voice of the Chief Shepherd. So a few godly men and women began to meet every Saturday to pray for their minister; they asked God to give him what they felt he needed.

One Saturday, Sutherland came to the door of the house where they had gathered. He heard someone speaking in prayer and stopped to listen. He was amazed to hear an old man asking God to give their minister His Spirit. Sutherland went away without anyone realising they had been overheard. Later he asked permission to join them in prayer. This was agreed, and it was not long before these godly people believed that their prayers had been heard. Sutherland's preaching now had an earnestness that it had lacked before then; God's sheep were hearing the voice of the Chief Shepherd. At first there were a few conversions but, as we have seen already, Sutherland later saw many souls converted under his ministry.

Let us pray that we, and many others, would see a springtime in our souls. *Revivals in the Highlands*, published by Reformation Press, is well worth reading.

# The Old Ploughman

## 2. What He Saw in His New World

George Medway was a former ploughman from Shropshire. John Dean invited him into his cottage one day and then brought him to church the next Sabbath morning. Under the first sermon he heard from the minister there, he was converted. "I'm in a new world", he announced again and again afterwards.

George went with his friend Dean to the evening service. The text was taken from Luke 15:2: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" – the words of the Pharisees and scribes about Jesus. The minister noticed George as he read the text; he noticed some tears fall from George's eyes. He believed that this was "the wondrous effect of the morning's" sermon. He noticed too that a part of his sermon made a powerful impression on the old ploughman, as the minister expanded on the thought that "Jesus Christ is able and willing to save the chief of sinners".

He referred to Zaccheus, who had profited by taking too much money from those who paid him their taxes; to the dying thief on the cross, who was a robber and a murderer; to sinners in Jerusalem, who insisted on Jesus being crucified and "insulted Him when in the agonies of death"; to Saul of Tarsus, the chief persecutor of his age. The minister went on: "Yet they were forgiven and renewed and sanctified, and are now mingling their praises with the spirits of the redeemed before the throne. And Jesus Christ is the same now as when He saved these men . . . the same in power and the same in compassion."

Then he asked, "Are not some of you . . . living witnesses of the truth of this? And, "Have you not gone with the multitude doing evil?" Had they not gone further than many in the number and the seriousness of their sins? Did they not tremble when looking back on the danger they then were in, yet they were altogether careless about it? They had to confess that they were among the chief of sinners. "Yet through the exceeding riches of divine grace," he told them, "you hope to be saved, even as others."

The next evening, George wanted to be introduced to the minister; so John brought him to meet the minister in his vestry. For some moments George was obviously embarrassed, unable to utter a word. But he soon recovered himself and said, "I am now in a new world. I'll tell you what I mean. I know I am in the old world, but what you said yesterday morning has led my heart into a new world, and my heart, not my eyes, sees wonderful things."

"And what have you seen in this new world?" the minister asked.

"I have seen myself a sinner. I have lived near 70 years sinning against God, and didn't know it till yesterday morning."

“What sins have you committed?”

“A power of sins, I’ve been a great sinner. Why, I didn’t love God nor fear Him. I didn’t know nothing about Him till yesterday morning.”

“What else have you seen in the new world?”

“I have seen Jesus Christ. O how kind to come down from heaven and die for us! This is new to me. It is wonderful.”

“What made you stay and take the bread and the wine yesterday morning?”

“Why, you said all should do it who loved Jesus Christ. I felt I loved Him. Yes, my heart told me so. It has been telling me so ever since. It tells me so now. I can’t speak His name but I feel I love Him. I can’t think about anything else very well. If I think of anything else, my heart gets dull and cold; but when I think about Jesus Christ it gets young again.”

“But why do you love Jesus Christ?”

“Because He came down from heaven and died on the cross. I don’t know how to make out very well what I mean. But I think Jesus Christ will save me. This makes me love Him. I feel a great change here”, and he put his hand over his heart. “I can’t tell it, but it is something real.”

“Are you quite sure that you feel a real change of heart?”

“Why, if there be no change in my heart, where do my fresh thoughts and feelings come from? I never had none such till yesterday morning. I don’t know much now; but I wouldn’t be again such a poor old ignorant sinner I was before yesterday morning for all the lands and houses in our village, or all the parish.”

“I hope your change is real, and that it will prove a lasting change.”

“I hope so; I should cry a power of tears if I thought I should be changed back again. The Lord save me from that!”

“Then you must thank Him for making this great change in you, and pray to Him to make the change a lasting one.”

“I do. I’m sure I do. I cried hundreds of tears last night when I was in bed, and they be such tears as I never cried before: tears of heart sorrow and heart gladness.”

“You hope to be saved?”

“I do, and am main thankful for it.”

“But how do you expect to be saved?”

“Why, just how you told yesterday morning. By Christ, and by nothing else. I should not like another Saviour, because He was so good as to die for us. How wonderful! I never heard anything like it before. I wish I had heard that blessed sermon 50 years ago.”

The minister was very pleased with the sincere simplicity of the old man. He could not describe in biblical language the great change through which

he was now passing – from a state of spiritual death to newness of life. Yet he said enough to satisfy the minister that he was now a new creature in Christ Jesus, and in the end, the whole congregation were satisfied.

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## Why Elsie Could not Eat

*Rev John Tallach*

This article is reprinted, with editing, from *The Young People's Magazine* for March 1937. The writer spent most of his ministry as a missionary in what is now Zimbabwe.

I suppose all of you will know the little girl who sometimes pushes away her food from her with contempt and says, I don't want this kind of food, Mother. And all of you will know what Mother's reply is: Well, that is naughty of you; do you not know that there are thousands of starving children who would be only too glad to get what you are refusing?

Now what Mother says is so true that you will open your eyes in wonder when I tell you of a girl who refused to take food from her parents and yet was pleasing to God while doing so. The girl I am to tell you about is called Elsie and at this time was 17 years old. She lives at a place called Shangani. The Free Presbyterian Church has a mission station there.

About two years ago Elsie's mother came to the missionary and asked him what she should do about Elsie. She explained that, for a week, the girl would neither eat nor speak, but lay with her face to the wall weeping. "When we ask her what is wrong with her, we get no reply."

Now, although Elsie's parents were both heathen people, Elsie herself was baptized some time before, and so the missionary had a special interest in her. At first Elsie would not reply to the missionary but, after he had prayed for her, she turned round, greeted him and said, "I am so glad that you have come. It is no use me trying to speak to my people; they cannot understand me, but you will. My body is quite well. My trouble is this: when I was baptized I promised to read the Bible and pray in my house every day. As you know, my parents are both heathen but I have regularly prayed with them and read the Bible to them but they are not willing to be converted.

"Both Father and Mother are heavy drinkers and spend most of their spare time at beer-drinks. Very often they come home drunk and, although they listen when I read the Bible, yet nothing I can do will make them go to God's house to hear it explained. Well, they came home as usual last week and it was so awful to see my parents, now old, going on in this way that I felt the whole thing to be hopeless. I felt that it was useless reading with them any

longer. My heart became so sore that I began to cry and have been doing this more or less since then. It is not that I will not eat anything but that I cannot – or indeed do anything while they are in this lost state.”

Now the missionary knew some of these feelings himself and was able to sympathise with her. But as he was speaking comfortingly to her, the mother began to speak. And what did she say, do you think?

To Elsie’s delight, she heard her saying, “Well, if that is the way of it, I will do my best to put the matter right by going to church on Sabbath”. And she kept her word. She is still a heathen, but there is more hope for her now that she goes to hear God’s Word explained to her. This is, of course, a comfort to Elsie, who now has regained her hope that the Lord will take her parents into His fold. I am pleased too to say that Elsie is now a full member in our church.

Now, before we finish, I want you to turn up three short portions of the Bible and read them. First, Luke 19:41: “He beheld the city, and wept over it”. Second, Acts 4:13: “They had been with Jesus”. Third, John 4:32: “I have meat to eat that ye know not of”. Now do you not think that this girl had been much with Jesus when she was so anxious to see sinners converted and had no appetite for food as long as they remained in a lost state? I think so.

You see, when we are born again, Jesus puts a hunger in us that takes away the hunger we feel in our bodies. Our bodily hunger is lost in the bigger hunger we feel in our souls. I know that you may not understand this, but will you pray that Jesus will make you able to understand it and that you may experience it? If He will answer your prayer, you will then join those who like Elsie are earnestly seeking the glory of the Redeemer on earth.

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## Two Sisters

### 1. The Parting of the Ways

*Rev K M Watkins*

Those of us who met the two sisters perhaps never saw two women more different in character. Yet they were from the same family and background. They had grown up in poverty in a remote place where the living was hard. They had little formal education. One had a feeble-mindedness which ill-fitted her for the learning of this world. She would have been looked on as “simple” by those around her. Today she would be described as having “learning difficulties”. Without the beauty and outward success that this world makes so much of, both of them would be considered of little value.

These two sisters, like all the other ordinary descendants of Adam and

Eve, were conceived and born as sinners. Both had reason to say with David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). No doubt all the proofs of their fallen condition showed themselves clearly enough, as they passed from infancy to childhood, and from teenagers to young adults. In these things there would have been very little difference between the sisters, though they would have leaned to their own particular forms of sin. What they had in common meant that they both needed to say, "All we like sheep have gone astray". As to their own distinct sinful inclinations, they each needed to confess, "We have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

Have you ever stopped to think of your own sinful condition? When you look at everyone else you know, including any brothers and sisters, have you seen that "there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22,23). And have you also seen that you show your sinfulness in ways that are different to others? There are sins which others do that you have little desire for. Again, there are sins that you keep falling into that they seem to have no interest in at all.

We did not meet the two sisters until they were old ladies. Their poor background, their lack of education, the infirmities of old age, especially after a life of hardship – all of that was plain to see. In those things there was no difference. But their lives, characters and desires could not have become more different. At some time there had been a serious parting of the ways – not in sisterliness, for they shared a bedroom in the care home where they spent their last days. But in religion, their ways had parted completely. This was revealed by their different attitudes to the house of God, to the people of God, and to the Christ of God.

The simple-minded sister attended church whenever she could. She was saying by her actions, "I joy'd when to the house of God, Go up, they said to me" (Psalm 122:1, metrical version). The other had no such interest or desire. We cannot remember seeing her in church even once.

What of yourself? If you were not made to go to church, would you go? Perhaps you have already stopped going. That makes you like the second sister. The prodigal son never attended the public worship of God when he was living his sinful life in the far country. Is this what you desire? To get away from home and away from church? Be warned. Once you stop attending church, it will be very difficult to start attending again. Only a few find their way back. Usually the consequences of that wrong turn last for a lifetime.

The second sister was like Cain (Genesis 4:16), who "went out from the presence of the Lord", never to return. Young friend, never forsake the public means of grace. If you have already done so, turn your feet back to church

immediately, for it will only get harder and harder the longer you delay it. For every prodigal who returns, there must be many more who never do. Choices made when young, when we are first carving out our own path in life, can have fatal consequences. “Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” in God’s house, “as the manner of some is” (Hebrews 10:25), is one of the biggest and most dreadful mistakes we can make in our lives. That is what the second sister did, and she never recovered from it.

Or do you feel that you just cannot stop going to church? That is a good thing to have, and may you never lose it! For it is at church, under the preaching of the gospel, that the Lord delights to convert sinners to Christ and to feed His people. “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation” (*Shorter Catechism*, Answer 89).

After a church service, the first sister almost always had two things to say. One was about herself. “O to be of them!” she would say, showing her attitude towards the people of God. Her need and desire was not just to be *with* God’s people in His house, but to be *herself* one *of* His true children. She knew that it was neither an ordinary nor an easy thing to be a sincere child of God. That needed real saving grace from the Lord. This explained her oft-repeated prayer that she really would be “of them”. The other sister seemed to have no special thoughts about God’s people at all. She did not seek them out, and had no desire to be with them, and certainly did not desire to be the same as them.

What of yourself? Do you desire to be a real child of God? Or are you content to be a child of the world? Do you think that you can easily change from being one to the other? Or have you seen that only the all-powerful grace of God can transform you? If you have understood that and are concerned about it, then like that sister you will be praying to the Lord to work that change in you. If not, you will be like the other sister who cared for no such thing.

The second thing the one sister had to say when she left church showed her attitude towards Christ. “O what a wonderful Saviour!” she would repeat, over and over. It was difficult to think that He had not been made precious to her soul. The prophet had foretold that “His name shall be called Wonderful” (Isaiah 9:6), and we felt that we were witnessing the prophecy’s fulfilment whenever we heard her speak in this way of the Altogether Lovely One. The Lord’s believing people think well of Christ: “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious” (1 Peter 2:7). We never heard the other sister have a single good thing to say about Christ.

Friend, listen to this: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:37). We ask you, not only, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42), but also, "What *speaking* ye of Christ?" Perhaps you have used the word *wonderful* to describe many things. But have you ever used it to describe what Christ means to you? Has He become The Wonderful One in your eyes? Or do you still think that there is nothing very special about Jesus of Nazareth? These ladies parted company especially over this matter: what Christ meant to them.

There is more to be written about these two sisters, which we hope to come to next month, God willing. But meanwhile, what have you known of the parting of the ways yourself? Like the first sister, are you parting company with the ungodly, and choosing out the house of God, the people of God and the Christ of God? Or are the godly parting company with you, as you continue to think little of these things that have come to mean everything to them?

Ruth and Orpah were sisters-in-law, but one day there was a parting of the ways. Orpah returned to her people and her gods, but Ruth clave to Naomi, to Naomi's God and to Naomi's people, saying to her mother-in-law: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

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## The Sons of God: Adoption in Romans 8

### 6. The Spirit's Help

*Rev David Campbell*

The last section dealt with a further mark of the sons of God given in this Youth Conference paper: *they have the Spirit of adoption*; it is not the spirit of bondage but the spirit of love. This article contains a further mark drawn from Romans chapter 8.

A fifth mark of the sons of God is that the *Spirit helps their infirmities* in prayer. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (verse 26).

This large and important verse is a precious truth to encourage the children of God when they have no words in prayer but groans and sighs. That is itself a mark of the children of God: they often mourn and cry and sigh before their Father in heaven. Christ said of them: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted". And the Psalmist speaks of God looking down from His holy place and hearing the prisoners' mourning groans (Psalm

102:19,20). There are many ways to illustrate this text, but perhaps giving you an example might be sufficient to direct you in looking for this mark in yourselves – an example of how the Spirit actually helps the children of God in connection with praying. He helps by instructing their souls in the truth and enabling them to apply the truth to their trials in a gracious way. In this way their prayers are submissive, trusting and hopeful cries to God.

Perhaps some of you have heard of the Covenanter girl, Emilia Geddie. Her story is serialised in early volumes of *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* and was once published in a booklet. She died in 1681 at the age of just 16 and showed from a very early age that she was one of the true children of God. It is said of her that she learned much of the Scriptures by heart, including Romans 8, which she said was a whole Bible to her. She was much given to secret prayer and was well known in gatherings of friends for her devout prayers and serious thoughts and impressions of divine truth. She spent many months in severe pain during her final illness. Being asked what supported her, she answered,

“First, I look on my trouble as the fruit of my sin, and do think it my duty to bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him. Secondly, I am made to wonder that it [the illness] is not and hath not always been so with me. Thirdly, I am helped to bless the Lord that it is not worse. Fourthly, means are used for my health, and I look up to the Lord that He would bless them, in so far as He shall see meet [suitable], for His glory and my comfort. Fifthly, I submit through grace to the will of God, whether for life or death. Sixthly, I have the faith that it will be better, for I reckon that the afflictions of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed.”

I think this is a very beautiful testimony to the power of divine grace supporting the children of God in afflictions. The Psalms reflect this help in prayer which the afflicted receive from the Holy Spirit. This is one of the features that make them so very useful in the New Testament age. God brings His people into trouble and leaves them under burdens to encourage prayer. This is one of the reasons why they have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death and through death itself. In the thought of death and in preparation for it, they are being taught to cry to God in their trouble. Often with groans and sighs, they learn to be submissive to His will, as Emilia Geddie was, and in this way they are delivered out of all their fears. Have you learnt any of this spirit of prayer from the teaching and help of the Holy Spirit in your infirmities?

It is not long or well-spoken public prayers, nor is it mere feelings, including one of joy, that makes true prayer. The help of the Spirit in prayer

may be a reality in the experience of a person, without formal prayer in well-chosen words that others can hear. With the help of God's Spirit, His children learn to pour out their hearts in sincerity before Him. Although He already knows their needs before they ask, they are required to tell Him so that, with a humble confidence in His mercy, they take to Him their burdens, needs, fears and troubles. Often they will find relief in answer to their cries. Whatever help is given, it is a valuable lesson to learn that God orders our troubles as He sees fit, and as is best for us. In this way many persecuted and many greatly-tried believers have lived and died as memorials to God's grace.

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## A Firm Hold of the Lord Jesus

*Robert M M'Cheyne*

M'Cheyne was a godly minister in Dundee who died when he was only 29. This is a letter to someone called C (we only know the initial of the first name). C was "inquiring after Jesus". The letter, written in September 1842, has been edited. St Peter's (mentioned in the letter) was M'Cheyne's church.

**I** do not and cannot forget you and, though it is very late, I have to write you a few lines to say, Follow on to know Jesus. I do not know if you can read my crooked writing, but I will make it as plain as I can. I was reading this morning (Luke 2:29) what old Simeon said when he got the child Jesus into his arms: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation". If you get a firm hold of the Lord Jesus, you will be able to say the same.

If you had died in your ignorance and sin, dear soul, where would you have been this night? How shall we sufficiently praise God if He really has brought you to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! If you are really brought to Christ, it will be something like the case of the wise men of the east (Matthew 2). When they were in their own country, God attracted their attention by means of a star. They followed it and came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we . . . are come to worship Him." Herod and Jerusalem were troubled at the saying. No one was seeking Christ but themselves.

The world thought they were mad; but soon they saw the star again, and it led them to where the infant Saviour lay – His robe of state a swaddling band, His cradle the manger. Yet they kneeled down and called Him, "My Lord, and my God". They got their own souls saved and gave Him gifts, the best they had, and then departed into their own country with great joy in their hearts, and heaven in their eye.

So it may be with you. Most of those around you do not care for Jesus. But you are asking, Where is He? and saying, We are come to be saved by Him.

No one around you can tell. They think you are going out of your mind. But God is leading you to the very spot where the Redeemer is – a lowly, despised, spit-upon, crucified Saviour. Can this be the Saviour of the world? Yes, dear soul, kneel down and call Him your Redeemer. He died for such as you and me. And now you may go away into your own country again, but not as you came; you will carry with you joy unspeakable and full of glory.

A young woman called on me, last Wednesday, whom I had never seen before. She said she was a stranger from another part of Scotland; she came to this town about a year ago, and attended St Peter's, and there for the first time learned that she was a sinner and needed Christ. About four weeks ago she found rest and joy at the Saviour's feet. I said to her, "Then you will bless God that He brought you from your own country to this place". She said, "I often do that".

Another woman came, the same evening, whom I had never seen. She said she had been married eight years to a wicked husband. One of her neighbours had brought her to our church, and now she feels that Christ has saved her soul. Thus the work goes on: "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved".

A young woman was with me tonight in great distress. She said, "I have a wicked heart within me that would sink a world".

I said, "I am thankful to hear you complain of your wicked heart, dear friend, it is unsearchably wicked. There is not a sin committed on earth or in hell but has its spring and fountain in your breast and mine. You are all sin; your nature is sin; your heart is sin; your past life is sin; your prayers are all sin. O that you would despair of being righteous in yourself! Then take the Lord Jesus for your righteousness. In Him is no sin. He stood in the place of sinners and offers to be your shield, your way to the Father."

You may be righteous in Christ with a perfect righteousness which is broad as the law and pure as the light of heaven. If you had an angel's righteousness, you might well lay it down and put on Jesus. The robe of a blood-washed sinner is far whiter than that of an angel. Do not fear the frown of the world. When a blind man comes against you in the street, you are not angry at him; you say, He is blind, poor man, or he would not have hurt me. So you may say of the poor world; when they speak evil of Christians, they are blind. If they knew their sin and misery, and the love of Jesus, they also would cleave to Him. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."

Keep close to the Lord Jesus. He is greater than all that can be against

you; He is the Shepherd of His sheep; He will defend you from wolves. Pray for the Holy Spirit, dear friend. Ask Him to come into your heart and abide there. It is a mean dwelling for such a guest. Still He will make it clean and holy by dwelling in it. Ask Him to teach you to pray (Romans 8:26,27). He will give you “groanings that cannot be uttered”. Ask Him to change your heart, and make it like that of Jesus. Ask Him to write the law upon your heart, and to keep you in every time of need.

I fear you are weary of my long sermons. Remember, if you are not saved, I will be a witness against you in the judgement day.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden, / Lost and ruined by the fall; / If ye tarry till you're better, / You will never come at all. / Not the righteous – / Sinners Jesus came to call.

Farewell! Write me soon and tell me all your heart.

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### For Junior Readers

## Three Lessons

**H**ave you ever learned the verse near the end of Matthew, chapter 6, a verse which has good advice for everyone? But perhaps it especially has good advice for young people like you, starting out on life's journey. It says, “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness*; and all these things shall be added unto you”. Try to think over these words and what exactly they mean.

A minister of long ago was explaining this verse to young people. He said there were three different lessons in it for them to learn:

1. A grammar lesson – the first word, *seek*, is a verb, an action word. It is giving a command, *seek*. It is not just a suggestion; it is something you must do. It is your duty to obey the command.

2. An arithmetic lesson – *first*. This is the most important thing for you to do in life. The things of Christ should have priority over all your own things. Let the *first* part of your life, the days of your youth, be set apart to God. Also seek Him *first* every morning; let your first waking thoughts be of God as you read your Bible and pray.

3. A geography lesson – “the kingdom of God”. This includes all that belongs to the honour and glory of God. The Bible is your guidebook to this *kingdom*; so make sure you read your Bible and obey it. You should be seeking eternal happiness for yourself. You need to know Christ and to be clothed in *His righteousness*.

There is a little poem which sums up the teaching of this verse:

“Seek ye *first* the kingdom; not the things of earth.  
Priceless are the treasures of immortal worth.  
Like a flitting shadow, time will pass away,  
But the heavenly riches change not, nor decay.  
  
Seek ye *first* the kingdom; seek the gift of God.  
'Tis the Saviour's offer purchased by His blood.  
Seek ye *first* His glory; be it life's sweet aim;  
Him to serve and honour, trusting in His name.”

Will you not pray with Moses, in the words of Psalm 90, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. . . . O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.”

*J van Kralingen*

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*For Younger Readers*

## The Stolen Money

A young woman was working in a large house, for an important lady. There were other women working in that house too. They told the young woman to take some money from the place where the lady kept it.

She did so again and again, and yet the lady seems never to have noticed that any money was missing. Indeed this went on for seven years. When the stolen money was all added up, it would have come to about £4000.

Probably the woman knew she was doing wrong. Perhaps the other women were taking some money too. But she did not think much about it until afterwards. Yet it was not her money. She was doing wrong, and God saw that she was doing wrong.

After she stopped working for this lady, the woman started to think about what she was doing. She saw that it was wrong. She saw that it was wrong before God; she saw that she was stealing. She was sinning against God.

She knew too that she should pay back the money. But that was not possible; she did not have nearly enough money to do so.

Time passed and the woman was soon to get married. The lady she now worked for gave her a large present of money, more than

she needed to pay back what she stole. So she gave some of it to a minister so that he would pay back the stolen money for her, and some more. He did so.

Some of the money was sent back. The woman could have kept it but, because of her sin, she did not want to use it for herself.

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## The Boy's Question

A boy heard his father ask God to curse his soul if he did not win some bet that he had made. The father was foolish – and sinful – to have made the bet. He was to gain or lose some money on some event that may well have been completely out of his control. One thing is sure: it was under God's control. And the fact that everything is under God's control means that no one should bet on anything whatever.

More importantly, this was a very sinful prayer. If God had answered the man's prayer, He would have sent the man's soul to hell for ever. We should have a very solemn feeling about hell, especially if we have reason to believe that we are still on the way there. Hell is what we may call a God-forsaken place; so no one can have God's blessing there. It is a place of punishment – punishment that will go on for ever. So there can be no happiness in hell, no friendship, nothing that is good in any way.

Perhaps his mother had been teaching the boy from the Bible. But he asked his father a very wise question: "Are you willing that God should take you at your word?"

"No, no, no," gasped the man, suddenly realising how serious were the words that he had spoken. The question followed him all day. He left work early, very upset. In the evening he went to a little prayer meeting held near his home. His son's pointed question was "still sticking in his heart", as someone said. The question was described as "sharper than a two-edged sword". These words are used in the Epistle to the Hebrews to describe the Word of God (4:12), but there can be no doubt that the boy's question was based on the Word of God, which was why it had such an effect on his father.

When he reached the place where the prayer meeting was held, the father told people what had happened and asked them to pray for him. We are not given many more details about what happened. But we are told the most important thing: the man was converted. God, who had made him feel his sin, applied to him the truth about Jesus Christ, so that he trusted in Him as the Saviour of sinners. The man confessed, "The most powerful preaching I ever heard was that anxious and solemn question of my little son".

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## A Pair of Boots

A little East-end London lad whose feet were poorly shod,  
Was taught that for his every need he ought to pray to God.

And thus, with simple faith, he prayed for what he needed so:  
A pair of boots to keep his feet from cold and wet and snow.

One day, a neighbour called upon the mother of the boy,  
Bringing some boots, a gift which filled the mother's heart with joy.

"My boy has outgrown these; I think they'll fit your child," she said,  
The grateful mother took the boots and laid them on his bed.

Next morning, when the boy awoke, the boots he soon espied,  
Then, seizing them, he hastened down. "O Mother, look!" he cried.

"Here are the boots I asked God for, my prayer He's answered, though  
I didn't see Him bring them, but they came from Him, I know."

Was it by chance the neighbour gave those outgrown boots away?  
No, was it not God's answer to the boy, thus taught to pray?

So, with a simple, childlike faith, take all your needs to God.  
Your little trials, your daily cares, trust Him in paths untrod.

God's ear is ever open to the humblest, feeblest prayers,  
Whatever your condition is, He understands; He cares. *Anon*

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## Looking Around Us

### Almost a Collision

In November 2018 a drone came so close to a Loganair plane near Glasgow Airport that the pilot feared it might crash into the aircraft. It was only about five metres from the pilot's window and it was above the greatest height a drone is allowed to fly at: 400 feet.

The UK Airprox Board is responsible for investigating such incidents. They have issued a report saying that the drone was putting aircraft in the area in danger. It also said that the risk of a collision was high. It stated,

“The board considered that the pilot’s overall account of the incident portrayed a situation where providence had played a major part in the incident and / or a definite risk of collision had existed”.

It is interesting to note the use of the word *providence* in the report in such a secular age, for, if it is used properly, providence ought to be seen as God’s providence. It is God who is in control of everything that happens. And what should be acknowledged here is that God, in His kindness kept the plane from colliding with the drone. We should always acknowledge God’s kindness in taking us safely whenever we travel. Even if we only go a short distance, we should ask God to take care of us and, when we return safely, we have good reason to thank God for His care.

What reason we have to ask God to take us safely along the whole of our journey through this world and to bring us at last into the blessedness of heaven! Then, if we get there – in other words, if we are trusting in Christ to save us from our sins and bring us to heaven – how much we will want to thank God for bringing us there safely!

### **Living with the Consequences**

Michael Cohen was a lawyer for President Donald Trump from 2006 until 2018. He has now been found guilty of breaking United States law while in that position and sentenced to three years in prison.

He was brought before a committee of the US Congress to be questioned about his actions. He told the committee that, for the rest of his life, he would live with the consequences of what he had done.

But, more significantly, will he live with these consequences throughout eternity? The answer is, Yes, if he does not repent and turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. But if he does repent and believe, the answer is, No.

And the guilt of *our* sins will follow us for ever and ever if we do not repent and believe in Jesus Christ. We may not have committed the kind of sins that would bring us a prison sentence; yet we have done many things that were wrong – that were sins against God. So we deserve His wrath and curse for ever. But let us never lose sight of what Christ has done for sinners like us, in His sufferings and death: “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). And we are called: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

**Price £1.00**