

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Cover Picture: Baby swallows in their nest.

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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod BSc, 11 Auldcastle Road, Inverness, IV2 3PZ. Tel: 01463 712872; e-mail: kdmacleod@gmail.com. All unsigned articles are by the Editor.

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Outgrowing God?

Many young people give up religion as they become older. It is very sad if they give up the religion of the Bible, true Christianity. Among those who have turned from Christianity was a 15-year-old Richard Dawkins, who was to become Professor for Public Understanding of Science in Oxford University from 1995 to 2008. Now retired, he is still writing books, the latest of which is, *Outgrowing God*. Presumably the title is meant to suggest that he outgrew his need for God, at age 15, though 15-year-olds – and they may not always want to admit it – still have much to learn.

Of course, we all have much to learn, no matter how old we may grow, and that includes the writer of this article. Especially, how much we all need to learn about God, who is the Creator of everything, the One who therefore has a total right to our obedience! How much we also need to learn about ourselves as sinners, and about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners!

But the fact is that we can never outgrow our need for God. Dawkins decided that the theory of evolution provides a better explanation for the complexity to be found in living creatures – better than the Bible's teaching about creation. But no, it is not. And one wonders if Dawkins ever saw real, prayerful godliness at close quarters, if he ever spent time with those who believed in God and trusted in the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, as that message is revealed in the Bible. Did he ever know people well who prayed and often received answers to their prayers? Probably not. But those who never knew such people should not argue that the God whom these people know and trust in does not exist.

Professor Dawkins writes with great assurance that he is right. Yet someone studying for a PhD in Assyriology at Cambridge University, writing in the February 2020 issue of *Evangelical Times*, states that a paragraph by Dawkins on ancient Babylonian writings (part of the student's specialist subject) was "riddled with factual errors that anyone who had done more than a few minutes' research would have avoided". This leaves one with very little confidence in what Professor Dawkins presents as facts.

What is true is that God does exist, and He has revealed Himself as the Creator of all things. He has done so in the Bible. Professor Dawkins may reject the Bible, but that is what unconverted people want to do unless they are restrained in their unbelief by God Himself – and for Him to restrain unbelief is a great kindness. Paul tells us that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Romans 8:7); they have no love for God; rather they reject Him and His claims. The “carnal mind” is the mind of the flesh, as opposed to the spiritual mind, the mind that the Spirit of God has come to work in, the mind that He has changed, so that these people now love God and love the revelation that He has given in the Bible.

It is natural for unconverted people to reject what God has revealed; they do not want to believe it. They do not want to face up to what He says about those sins and about the consequences of going on in sin and rejecting His offer of salvation in the gospel; they would prefer to go on in their own ways, the ways of unbelief. And if their consciences will allow them, they may tell themselves that the best thing to do is to ignore God, to give up reading the Bible and going to church. They may assume that it is safe to outgrow God and to live a godless life.

Yet God in His kindness may so work on the conscience of such people that they cannot get away from the idea that God does exist, and that the Bible is His book. God keeps them from thinking that they can outgrow Him. They may not be His friends – they are not, if they do not love Him sincerely. But they know that God is what the Bible says He is. Yet they do not act on the basis of what they know. They may realise that they must be converted at some point in their lives, at some time before they die, if they are to escape a lost eternity. But they are in no hurry to seek Him, to turn to Him, to repent and believe the gospel.

They may think somewhat like Felix did, when Paul was reasoning with him about spiritual things, including the judgement to come. In the end he told Paul: “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). But no time ever came that Felix found convenient. Yes, he did call for Paul, but he had no concern to get good for his soul; all he wanted was a bribe. Needless to say, Paul did not pay bribes, and he had to accept the consequences of his obedience to God’s law – he was left in prison – and he submitted to that as God’s will for him.

For Felix, his sin in rejecting Paul’s warnings led him on to the further sin of dishonesty. And the danger is that those who think they may outgrow God will commit many other sins that they would avoid if they had begun to seek the Lord when they had the opportunity to do so. To think you can outgrow your need of God is extremely dangerous.

Many people have thought that they had outgrown their need for God, yet some of them have realised, in time, that they were wrong. They may have wandered far from home and have lived as if there was no God and that everything came into existence through evolution. Yet God spoke to them and they could not resist what He had to say. They began to seek Him, and in His mercy they found Him. And now that God has drawn them to Himself, they have no doubt that God is the Creator of all things and that their ideas about evolution were false.

But what about those who, having felt they had outgrown God, go on in that way? If they do not repent, their hearts will become harder and harder; their hearts will become more and more resistant to the truth about God and the fact that He is the Creator of all things. If they go on in this way till they die, what can their end be but to go down to a lost eternity? Who in hell can question that there is a God? They cannot; it is so very obvious to them now that God does exist. And there must be many who see clearly that their first mistake was to assume that God does not exist and that they could outgrow their need for Him.

If you are tempted to accept the ideas of so many influential people that there is no God and that there is no Creator, stop and consider your position. Do not rush on to a dangerous conclusion but take another look at Romans 1:19,20, two verses which are part of what God says to us. There we are told that “the things that are made” point to “His eternal power and Godhead”. The human body, for instance, and its various parts – including individual cells – are so wonderful and so complicated that they could not possibly have developed into their present state by chance – not even by a very long series of chance changes.

A quick glance, even in a pre-scientific age, should have convinced people – as it convinced Paul – that the creation with all its wonders could not have come about by chance. Only an infinite Creator could have brought it about. And the more that is learned about the human eye or brain, or any other part of the body, the more unlikely it is that it could have come into its present state of complexity and effectiveness by natural means and apart from God’s creative power.

Yet *you* may still come to church regularly; you may assume that the Bible is true and that God did create the world; you may realise that you cannot outgrow God. But you may do all this without turning from sin and unbelief and without looking to Christ Jesus for the pardon of your sin. Remember that a merely-outward religion cannot bring you to heaven. Ask God earnestly to wash away all your sin, give you a new heart and make you willing to trust in Christ Jesus, who died so that sinners like you may be saved.

Counted Innocent in Heaven's Court

1. Joshua Stands Accused

Rev J R Tallach

This paper about the Bible's teaching on justification was given at the Youth Conference in 2019.

Martin Luther, the Reformer, stated that justification was the teaching by which a Church stands or falls. John Calvin, another Reformer, called it "the hinge" of the Reformation, meaning that the whole Reformation turned on this one point: How shall a man be just with God? It is as though one man was holding up the world; if that man stumbled, the entire world would come crashing down.

The doctrine of justification gives security to every other part of the world of salvation. The knowledge of God the Saviour, election, effectual calling, repentance, regeneration, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are all held up securely as long as the Church believes justification. Where it is abandoned, nothing is secure. The Roman Catholic Church destroyed itself by denying justification, and the Reformation Church revived by recognising it. As with the Church so with the individual. You and I stand or fall by this doctrine.

We will consider this teaching in the light of the events recorded in Zechariah 3. The Old Testament prophets received knowledge about the things of God, and they passed it on to the people. They did so in different ways, as Hebrews 1:1 says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets". One of these different ways was by a vision, and that is what we have in Zechariah 3. The nearest event nowadays corresponding to the scene in Zechariah 3 is a law court where an accused man is put on trial. The question to be resolved by the trial is, Is this man guilty of this crime or is he innocent?

To be justified is to be found innocent: when the judge says to the accused, You are found not guilty and are free to go. So the publican in Luke 18 "went down to his house justified". The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing like a man set free. And the Apostle Paul declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

The setting in which the events in Zechariah 3 took place is a court. I do not know if you have ever been to a court but, as in this chapter, there is a judge, called here the angel of the Lord, who presides over all that happens. There is the accused, Joshua. And in a court of law, there is a lawyer who

brings the charge against the accused; here it is Satan, the accuser of the brethren. The question to be resolved is, Is Joshua guilty and so to be punished, or innocent and therefore to be set free?

We see in Scripture that this is the setting in which justification appears. "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what sayeth the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:1-3). One other text will suffice to show that the setting of justification is a trial. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Thus the word *justify* means to clear someone of guilt in a trial, or to hold someone just – as opposed to *condemn* or to *accuse*: "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgement, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deuteronomy 25:1). The setting is a law court.

The *first* person of importance is the *judge*, here called "the angel of the Lord". This is another term for the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a just judge; He is "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus". (Romans 3:26).

God is merciful. He speaks of Himself as "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

He acts as a king. He is sovereign. "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" All power is His, as He said to the disciples before sending them out to preach the gospel: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). He is infinitely wise in devising a way of salvation for sinners, "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" (John 3:16).

The *second* person of importance in Zechariah 3 is *the accused*. His name is Joshua, the high priest. The high priest represented all of the Children of Israel before God – from the time when a high priest was appointed at the foot of Mount Sinai till Christ cried on the cross: "It is finished". Christ as high priest represents the whole spiritual Israel of God – every sinner saved by grace in the whole history of the world.

Joshua was clothed in filthy garments, and this reminds us that everyone is born in sin, brought forth in iniquity. Our very righteousnesses, or good deeds, are really like filthy garments before a holy God. Although Joshua

was being accused by Satan, he had nothing to say in his own defence; he remained silent. The publican in the New Testament came up to the temple to worship, yet had nothing good to say about himself but rather: "God be merciful to me a sinner". That is how it was with Joshua and, as Christ represents all God's people, that is how it is with all His people.

Third, Satan is like the lawyer in the court who brings the charge against the accused. It is typical of Satan, the accuser, that he was the one who tempted man at the beginning and was the occasion of the Fall of man. And, following on from that fall, he is the accuser of the brethren. Job was greatly troubled by his attention and Paul was "not ignorant of his devices". This gives us the setting in which justification has its biblical place.

Wrong Turnings and a Right One

It was a winter afternoon a long time ago. Job's father asked him to take two empty sacks to Brown, the miller, in the next village about two miles away. "Be sure you take the right turning, Job," said his father; "and, as it will be quite dark before you get back, you had better take the lantern with you."

But Job was sure that he did not need a lantern. "I can find my way back in the dark with my eyes shut," he claimed; "there is no fear of me taking the wrong turning." Job was far too confident, especially because he and his family had not lived long in that area; so he did not yet know his way around the district well.

Job delivered the sacks to the miller and set off for home. But night fell, and it was soon completely dark; there was no moon to give even a little light. Now Job did not know which way to go. He went one way and then another, but he could not find the right way. Somewhere he had taken a wrong turning.

He stopped to think, and then he heard footsteps. They could have been a robber's, but Job had to take the risk and called out to the man for directions. "My lad," the man answered, "you are quite out of the way; you have taken the wrong turning."

The man was going the same way as Job had to take, and Job was glad to be brought safely home. He was now rather less confident in his ability to find his way in the dark. But there were to be other, more serious, wrong turnings in his life.

Not long after the evening when Job got lost, he went to work at the Manor Farm. He lived in the farmhouse, sharing a room above the stable with another farm servant who worked a horse and cart. Before he left home,

his mother told him: "Job, if you would have the blessing of God rest upon you, do not forget to pray to Him every night and morning". The first night at the farm, Job's roommate was in bed before him. Job sat down on a chair.

"Why don't you get into bed, Job?" asked the carter. Whatever answer Job gave, the real reason was that he was ashamed to pray in front of someone else and yet was afraid to go to sleep without praying. He knew that it was his duty to obey his mother and to seek his mother's God. But Job did not obey his mother; he went to bed without praying. By doing so he took a wrong turning, a seriously-wrong turning – what he later realised was a turning point in his life, a point when his life took a bad turn for the worse.

Job's parents were both godly and soon afterwards they died. Job forgot all their good advice and their warnings; at least he did not make any use of what they told him; he ignored it. He stopped going to church; he even sold their Bible, for just a few pence. And his friends encouraged him to take other wrong turnings by telling him: "You may live as you like and get to heaven at last". It is a very dangerous idea and completely false.

After some time, Job grew tired of farming and joined the army. But he did not like the life of a soldier and ran away to some seaport. There he joined the crew of a ship; he thought it would be wonderful to visit other parts of the world.

Job's ship met many storms, and one of these storms drove the ship onto a rock. On that terrible night, the ship was wrecked and most of the crew perished. Only three were saved, one of whom was Job. He described his situation: "The thunder roared; the lightning flashed across the sky; and the waves rose like mountains. . . . I was filled with terror. Though I had been ashamed to pray before the carter in the little room over the stable. I was not ashamed to call upon God before my two shipmates on the top of the rock. I cast myself on my knees and prayed to God to save me, body and soul, for Jesus Christ's sake."

The long night passed and, in the morning, the wind started to go down. Then they saw a ship and they signalled to it. How glad they must have been when they saw a boat being let down from the ship and coming towards them! They knew that the ship's crew had seen their signal. The boat rescued them and, at last, Job reached his own country again; he was then, he confessed, "a wiser man than I left it".

Did Job take any more wrong turnings? We do not know much about his later life, but what we do know is that God made him able and willing to make a right turning. Job tells us himself: "It was some time after I had given up a sailor's life that God, by His Holy Spirit, brought me to see that I was in the broad way that leads to death. I felt that I was a sinner; but then I was

taught that Jesus Christ was a Saviour, able and willing to save the chief of sinners. I believed in Him with all my heart and, through His grace, was led to repent of sin and to live, as I hope, a life devoted to His service.”

As he sat in his old armchair at the front of his cottage, John wrote about some of the events in his life. He did so because he wanted to do good to others. So he advised young people who would read his story: “Be sure that you take the right turning” – no doubt meaning that they should turn from their sins and look to Christ as the only Saviour from sin. He knew by experience that “there are many false guides ready enough to lead you in the wrong way”. But Job also advised those who had been taught well at home when they were young that they should keep to what their parents had told them. His advice was good, and it applies to today’s young people as much as it did to any previous generation.

Life of David, Sweet Psalmist of Israel

4. His Old Age and His Psalms

Dr R J Dickie

Last month’s part of this Youth Conference paper told about David becoming king, about his wives and children and about his son Absalom’s rebellion. This is the last article in the series.

The ageing king. Relatively little is recorded about the last years of David. There was a famine which lasted three years, which the Lord inflicted for the past action of Saul “because he slew the Gibeonites”. Gibeon was an Amorite hill town about 25 miles north-west of Jerusalem. The Gibeonites demanded that David hand over seven of Saul’s family. He submitted to this and handed over two sons of Saul and five of his grandsons. The Gibeonites hanged all seven. David brought back their bodies and buried them in the family tomb of Kish (Saul’s father), along with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, which the men of Jabeshgilead had kept.

Also during this period David decided to take a census of the valiant men. When he had numbered the people, he realised that he had sinned: “I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly”. The Lord sent the prophet Gad to David to let him know of the three possible judgements – seven years of famine, three months of being pursued, or three days’ pestilence. “Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.” David said to Gad, “I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great: and let me

not fall into the hand of man". The Lord sent a pestilence and 70 000 died.

On the advice of Gad, David bought the threshing floor of Araunah, built an altar and offered sacrifices. The Lord repented, and the pestilence stopped before it reached Jerusalem. The threshing floor later became the site of Solomon's temple.

Once again border warfare with the Philistines flared, and David joined battle. But he grew weary and Abishai his nephew saved him from being killed by a giant Philistine. This narrow escape ended the career of David as a warrior, as his men swore unto him, saying, "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel".

Succession. The question of succession to the throne arose as David grew old. Amnon and Absalom were dead, and Adonijah was next in line. He decided to assert his claim to the throne without waiting for David's death. He gained powerful support and invited his brothers and the chief men of the city to a feast. He did not invite Solomon or those close to Solomon and Bathsheba.

Bathsheba and Nathan told David about Adonijah's scheme to take over the kingdom; so he decided to abdicate in favour of Solomon. Solomon was immediately taken to the spring at Gihon to be anointed. The noise of the crowd rejoicing reached Adonijah's festivities farther along the valley. Adonijah's guests quickly dispersed and Adonijah sought sanctuary at the altar. Solomon spared him for the time being. The struggle for succession to the throne therefore began and ended in the space of one day.

David's deathbed. On his deathbed, David charged Solomon his son to be faithful and to "keep the charge of the Lord . . . to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgements, and His testimonies". He also charged him to kill Joab and Shimei, but to show kindness to Barzillai the Gileadite on account of his acts of kindness to David. Then "David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David", thus ending his long life and his 40-year reign as king. He died around 970 BC.

David's Psalms. God has given us the Book of Psalms as the only manual of praise for the Church. In the Old Testament it is known as *Tehillim* (praises) and in Acts 1:20 it is called "the Book of Psalms". The titles of the psalms refer to Moses and Asaph and the sons of Korah as well as David. David is honoured in Scripture as "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:1) and we refer to *The Psalms of David in Metre* as his name appears most often – in the title of 73 psalms. We learn from other parts of Scripture that some psalms which do not contain his name in the title are ascribed to him (Psalm 52 is mentioned in Acts 4:25, and Psalms 96 and 105 in 1 Chronicles 16).

Many of David's psalms are grouped together: 3-41, 51-65, 68-70, 108-

110, 138-145. The ones which stand alone are 86, 96, 101, 103, 105, 122, 124, 131, 133.

A number of these psalm titles contain biographical details (3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 59, 60, 63, 142). When we look at this information, it appears that most of them relate to the period before David became king, and they largely describe his persecution by Saul. They specifically relate to the accounts of David in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. The biographical headings portray David especially as persecuted and as a mourning and guilty man. Three titled psalms are placed in David's reign as king (3, 51, 60) and they also describe unhappy episodes: his flight from Absalom (3), his adultery with Bathsheba (51), and an episode where he strove with two people (60).

Not all of David's psalms have such a character. A number of them look forward to times of blessing (101-104) and look forward to the Lord giving victory over his enemies (110). And the latter part of the book of Psalms contains his psalms which praise God (138-145). David's psalms also include some which summarise the history of the nation, and some which help us to understand important doctrines.

The psalms also celebrate the promises God made to David and his descendants (Psalms 18:50; 78:70; 78:72; 89:3; 89:20; 89:35; 89:49). The royal psalms (Psalms 2, 45, 72, 84, 89 and 110) join with the prophets in giving voice to Israel's messianic hopes for another king like David. The royal psalms centre on a king who meets universal opposition, is victorious, and establishes righteous rule from Zion over the nations. His kingdom is peaceful, prosperous, everlasting and faithful to the Lord. He is the friend of the poor and the enemy of the oppressor. He is the heir of the promises to David and is none other than the Son of God (Psalm 45:6).

The content of David's psalms makes them very precious. And that is true also for all the other psalms, of course. They are profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. They are full of the experiences of the Lord's people, and provide matter for prayer and meditation.

For Junior Readers

Jamie's Prayer

Jamie was only 10 years old when he developed a serious disease. He was brought to Glasgow Royal Infirmary to have an operation which, it was hoped, would prolong his life. But he was so weak that some of the doctors were afraid he might not survive the operation. The patient sat in the operating theatre until chloroform was given to him, to send him to sleep. From his

chair he could see the medical students standing around him; they were allowed to watch the operation,.

In a shaking voice he asked, “Will one of you gentlemen put up a wee prayer to Jesus for me in my trouble?” The surgeon patted him kindly on his shoulder, but there was no prayer – only smiles of pity from some of the students. Jamie turned his head away and in his childish voice prayed aloud. He asked that Jesus, “the friend of wee boys who loved him”, would be with him and have mercy on him in his time of need.

The surgeon felt a little anxious, knowing how careful he needed to be with the operation. Yet he knew afterwards that he had been helped to perform the operation successfully and that the answer to Jamie’s prayer must also have included him.

The next morning, when he did his ward round and came to Jamie’s bed, the doctor could see that the boy looked much more comfortable and was no longer in pain. Taking Jamie’s thin little hand in his, he whispered into the patient’s ear, “The good Jesus heard your prayer yesterday”.

A happy smile lit up the boy’s face. “I knew He would,” Jamie replied. Then he added, “You, doctor, were good to me too – but I have nothing to give you”. Then in a more cheerful tone he said, “I’ll just pray to Jesus for you!”

Jamie made a good recovery and was soon able to return home. Does this incident not show that even young boys and girls like you can be brought to have a firm faith in the Saviour and to bring all their needs to him in prayer. David sang, “In my distress I called on God, cry to my God did I;

He from His temple heard my voice, to His ears came my cry”.

J van Kralingen

The Wonderful Story of Jesus Christ

“Take this and read it,” a Japanese schoolgirl said as she handed a dirty little booklet to a woman standing at her door. “I found it in the street. Somebody must have dropped it.” The girl knew that the woman had been left a widow with three small children, that she had sought comfort at the Shinto shrine, that she had been to the Buddhist priest and that she had made a long pilgrimage. But it was all in vain; she was just as sad as before. “I read it,” the girl went on; “there is a wonderful story in it of a man who helps those who are helpless. I thought of you; it might do you good.”

The woman took the booklet. It was a copy of Luke’s Gospel in Japanese. She read it from beginning to end without stopping, and she knew that for

the rest of her life she could go only in the direction which the booklet had shown her. Her first action was to try to find out if there were any other Christians in the district. But though she made enquiries far and wide, she found none. Yet one day, in a market town nearby, she heard a missionary speaking about Jesus Christ. She went up to him and asked him to come to her mountain village and visit her home.

A few weeks later she was baptized, and in the course of a few months her village had a small congregation of those who had found faith in Christ through "the Book". It was the Book and nothing else that the Lord used in the woman's conversion. It was the Book that brought about this deep change in her life. Only later did she meet the missionary; he taught her in the faith and baptized her.

Adapted from Cheering Words

Seeking the Lord Early

4. Finding Jesus Christ

J C Ryle

Ryle directed this address to children; probably he was including young people. But everyone, young and old, should be able to read it with profit. It is taken, with editing, from Ryle's *Home Truths*, volume 5. Last month's article was about seeking Jesus Christ

Proverbs 8:17. *I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me.*

Our text tells us something about those who seek Jesus Christ, and what is it? It says they "shall find Him".

The Lord promises, "Those that seek Me . . . shall find Me". How good it is to hear that! Think how disagreeable it would be to seek and seek all our lives, and have nothing for our trouble, never finding Him. But the Lord says that they "shall find Me".

Now I want to tell you what this "finding" means. We shall not see Him with our eyes, for He is sitting at God's right hand in heaven, not on earth. And yet we are told we shall find Him. How can this be? Let me tell you.

You will find the Lord's presence in your own hearts and minds. You will feel something within you, as if the Lord Jesus Christ was sitting by you, taking care of you, putting His arm round you, smiling on you and speaking kindly to you. Just as a blind person feels brighter and happier when the sun is shining pleasantly on him, though he cannot see it, so if you and I seek Jesus Christ in earnest, we shall soon feel our hearts lighter and happier, and something within us will make us know that we have found Him.

Children, it is good indeed when we feel that we have really found Jesus Christ. May you never give up seeking till you have found Him. You will find Him, I know, if you seek on, for He is not far off. He is very near every one of us.

When you have found Him, you will feel as if you had got a sure Friend in whom you can trust – a Friend who will always love you, always watch over you, always take care of you, always be good to you, never fail you. When you have found Him, you will feel as if you had got strength and power to walk in God's ways, strength to keep from bad words and bad company, strength to do things which please God. When you have found Him, you will feel as if you had a pleasant Comforter living in your heart. You will be far more happy and cheerful and content, than you were before. Little things will not put you out as they used to do. You will have no reason to be afraid of sickness or pain or death.

How delightful it will be to feel all this! Try, all of you – do try – to find Jesus Christ.

For Younger Readers

The Lost Calf

One day in summer, the farmer lost one of his calves. He could not find it anywhere. When evening came, he still could not find the lost calf. He had to give up looking and go home.

The next morning he went looking again. There was a heavy dew on the grass as he walked across his fields, but he could not see the calf anywhere.

Then the farmer suddenly remembered there was something important he had not done. He had not prayed about the lost calf. So he knelt down where he was, on the wet grass, and prayed.

He told God about the lost calf that he could not find. But he was sure that God knew where the lost calf was. He was right: God knows everything about everything.

The farmer stood up again and began to walk towards a small group of trees. After only a few steps he saw the lost calf in front of him. God heard his prayer; it was God who made him look in the right place. And how thankful the farmer was to God for making him find the calf. We should always pray about everything.

What to Do with Our Burdens?

W S Plumer

Taken, with editing, from *Short Sermons for the People*. The text was Psalm 55:22: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee".

Every one has his own burdens. Some are very heavy. Even strong men bow down under them. They are too distressing to be borne by mere human strength. Trials have broken the heart of many a man. They have carried him to his grave in sorrow. He has felt as if a mountain was pressing him down. In his sadness he died. Let us look at some of these burdens.

1. Some are burdened with *poor health*. This casts a sadness over their whole life. In some cases people do not know what is wrong with them. Perhaps their nervous system is all out of order. Some such people get no sympathy. Perhaps they are so distressed and so ashamed of their own weakness that they hardly ask others to pity them. Shattered nerves cause as much pain as people can well endure. Indeed, they bring on many of the worst kinds of disease. The ticking of a clock or watch, or the chirping of a cricket, startles them. Sometimes even a pleasing event upsets them, as when a loved one comes unexpectedly.

Then others are *born with health problems*. It looks to them as if they were appointed to an early death. And many know that they must die soon. You will hear all these people saying that they would give all they have for good health. Wearisome days and nights are theirs. At night they wish it was morning; in the morning they wish it was night. Their bed does not comfort them. The sun does not cheer them. To them nature is never bright. Like the man with a ball and chain tied to his leg, they drag themselves along.

2. Others have a burden of *worldly care*. They are in constant difficulties. They are poor and perplexed. Their needs are beyond their means. They are not lazy, but they do not spend money wisely. Their crops fail, or their plans do not succeed. They rise early; they sit up late; still they eat the bread of sorrow. Sometimes through a rash act, and often because of some event out of their control, they find themselves in debt.

There are millions who have no skill in any trade, no means of doing better. "The poverty of the poor is his destruction." "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean." Oxen eat a great deal of corn but, by their work, more corn grows. Yet many a man has no oxen, no land, no place to keep his oxen. Perhaps he falls into the hands of cruel creditors, people to whom he owes money. There are still in the world men who "turn aside the way of the meek"; yes, they will sell "the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6,7).

The number of kind and merciful creditors is small. When men are very poor, their trials are very great. There is a danger that they will take a wrong step and do what is not honourable, or lose heart and stop making right efforts to help themselves. Some of them die for lack of comforts.

3. Others are heavily burdened with *the state of the world and the Church*. Rivers of waters run down their eyes because men do not keep God's law. Their constant cry is, "O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end". Perhaps tumult and strife fill the land. Then the prophet cried, "I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled. . . . My people . . . are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:19-22).

It is sad when God in judgement makes the fruitful place a wilderness; when He permits the wicked to riot and the cruel to rule; when the mean are allowed to govern the honourable; when evil men glitter in gold and good men are clothed in rags. The wicked conduct which brings down God's curse saddens a pious man. In every age there are godly souls who wish that their heads were waters, and their eyes a fountain of tears, that they might weep day and night over the pride and general ungodliness of their times.

This is still more true if those who insult God by their sins are our friends or relations. Wicked husbands are breaking the hearts of many good women. Wicked children are planting daggers in the hearts of their loving parents. The pure and honourable often weep over children who are drunk, or have been justly put in prison, or justly put to death.

4. Others carry a heavy burden of grief for *their own religious state*. They are in darkness. They have little or no light. They are cast down. They look for comfort, but they do not find it. They hoped to be set free from their worst sins already. They hate sin in every shape. They watch and pray against it. But when they least expect it, they are troubled by vile thoughts or an evil temper. They have a strong sense of the evil of sin and many fears that it will prevail against them. They love God's law, but find they do not obey it well. They love God, but He seems to hide His face from them. They long for communion with Him, but He seems like a wayfaring man that turns aside but for a night. When they would do good, evil is present with them.

Sometimes God's hand is heavy upon them day and night. Out of the depths they cry to the Lord. Their heart within them is desolate. They seek for light and hope, but gloom and clouds still settle over them. They are often at their wits' end. They fear they will come short at last; and the very thought pierces them with grief. They cannot go to the world for joy; they have found it a liar. They cannot yield their hearts up to stony hardness, for they are alive

unto God. What is best to do they do not know. So they decide to suffer on till they can see some way clear. Yet if God will help them, they will never cease to war against sin till they have conquered it.

Other people have other burdens, some of them special to themselves, and very great. Many a man thinks there is no sorrow like his sorrow. But time would fail us to describe every case. What then shall we do with our burdens? The text says: Cast them upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you. You cannot carry them alone. Roll them onto the arm of God. This is to be done by faith – faith in God's Word, faith in God's Son. Faith in the Lord Jesus is the only cure of heart troubles. By faith in the Lord Jesus, all the guilt of sin is taken away, its sting removed and its power destroyed. This faith must be exercised in prayer. Call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, and He will deliver you, and you shall glorify Him. Millions of times the poor and needy have cried for help and they have got all they asked.

One of our great errors is that we try to carry our burdens ourselves when they do not seem very heavy. John Newton tells of someone who seemed to do right when a great affliction came upon him, but lost his temper when a careless servant broke a cup or a plate. I have seen someone who seemed to have a good spirit when God took away a dear child, but spoke foolishly when his merchant charged too much for a packet of paper.

Cast all your burdens on the Lord. Any one of them will be too much for you if God leaves you to yourself. Your strength is weakness. You cannot keep yourself. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:30,31).

The text says that God will sustain His people. It does not say He will take away the burden, but He will hold them up in all their trials. So God's people have found it in every age. David says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted". Micah says, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me". Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Thomas Case said, "God may cast down, but He will never cast off true believers". William Dyer said, "Afflictions are blessings to us when we can bless God for afflictions". John Bunyan said, "In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God". Thomas Manton said, "If we have the kingdom of God at last, it is no great matter what we suffer by the way". And Philip Henry said, "That is always best for us which is best for our souls". Glory be to God in the highest.

Looking Around Us

Laughing at Death

“Grief Clowns: Laughing at Death.” This was the heading of a piece on the BBC website recently. No doubt the “grief clowns” mean to help those who have lost a loved one and make them feel happier.

But death is no laughing matter. It would not be a subject for laughter even if there was nothing after death. It is a breaking of strong bonds, especially between near relatives. Yet believers can go to God when they have lost a loved one or a close friend and find support in Him. Indeed all should go to Him with their troubles – not least in a time of sadness.

And there *is* something after death; there is a heaven and a hell. To be sent down to hell because of one’s sins is a tremendously solemn matter; to be taken to heaven, for the sake of Christ, is a tremendous blessing. In each case, to have bonds of love and friendship broken is difficult. But when that loved one was a child of God, we are told not to sorrow “as others which have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The reason is that there is to be a resurrection at the end of the world, when soul and body will be reunited, when death will be reversed. This should give us real hope.

Times when we are confronted with death should bring us to reflect on whether we are ready to die. They are times, especially for the unconverted, to seek the Lord, times when clowning and laughter are out of place.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20

Overseas Names for Exercise 1

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Rachel Campbell. *Fountain Inn:* Phinehas Kerr. *Gisborne:* Sarah van Dorp. *Grafton:* Hugh Marshall, Andrew White, Ronnie Zuill. *Singapore:* Owen Chai Yi. *Wisconsin:* Julia Smith.

Intermediate: *Auckland:* Amelia Smith. *Chesley:* Isabel Bouman, Kara Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Fountain Inn:* Ehud Kerr. *Grafton:* William Marshall, Mahala Zuill. *Singapore:* Naomi Chai Shi. *Sydney:* James Hickey.

Junior: *Auckland:* John and Peter Campbell, Aaron Smith. *Grafton:* Marcus Optland, Gavin Wood, Eve Zuill. *Sydney:* Jonathan Hickey. *Texas:* Cameron Smith. *Wisconsin:* Jenna Smith.

Upper Primary: *Auckland:* Owen Smith. *Chesley:* Hannah Bouman. *Fountain Inn:* Isabel Kerr. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn and Shona Hembd. *Grafton:* Shyla Hawkins, Bailee McAlpine, Eden Optland, Elijah Zuill. *Münster:* Clara Rösner. *Sydney:* Matthew Hickey. *Texas:* Alex Smith, Olivia Smith. *Wisconsin:* Calvin Smith.

Lower Primary: *Auckland:* Joseph and Marion Campbell, Keith Smith. *Chesley:* Angela Tuinier. *Fountain Inn:* Tala-Linn and Zerubbabel Kerr. *Gisborne:* Ashley and Preston Hembd. *Grafton:* Paton McAlpine, Kayla and Leo Wood. *Münster:* Conrad Rösner. *Sydney:* Abigail, Ethan and Lachlan MacDonald, David and Sarah Steel. *Texas:* Adele Smith, Anastasia and Charlotte Smith.

UK Youth Conference 2020

Arrangements

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

Dates: Tuesday, April 7, to Thursday, April 9.

Chairman: Rev Kenneth Macleod.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Free Presbyterian Church, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, or nm.fpchurch@btconnect.com. (Please make contact by March 14, if possible). See the February issue for an application form. The fee is £50 for those in full-time employment and £25 for others. Cheques are to be payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; to pay by bank transfer contact the e-mail address above. If necessary, you can contact Rev J B Jardine by phoning 01859 502253.

Programme

Tuesday, April 7

2.30 pm **The Law of God**

The Difference between Right and Wrong

by Rev K M Watkins

7.00 pm **Scripture Teaching on Family**

God's Plan for the Family in an Age of Attack

by Mr Matthew Vogan

Wednesday, April 8

9.30 am **W H Hewitson and R R Kalley in Madeira**

Spreading the Gospel Among Roman Catholics

by Rev Kenneth Macleod

2.30 pm **Historical Tour to St Andrews**

Scotland's Early Reformers

conducted by Rev David Campbell

7.00 pm **George Wishart**

Preacher, Reformer, Martyr

by Rev David Campbell

Thursday, April 9

9.30 am **Lessons from the Life of Jacob**

His Relevance for Today

by Rev J B Jardine

Price £1.00