

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Volume 85

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Number 6

Covid-19: How Should We React?

The Covid-19 virus seems to have caught everyone's attention. Stories about the disease and its consequences occupy most of every news bulletin. The virus has affected just about every country in the world; millions of people have caught the infection and hundreds of thousands have died. When this is so, we should be asking what we ought to learn from it.

The first thing we must say is that God is in control of everything; He is even in control of every disaster that happens. We read in the Bible the question: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). *Evil* here does not refer to what is sinful; so what does it mean? It means *trouble*. If there is trouble in a city or a home or a country, it has happened in God's providence. He is in control of every such trouble.

But why does God send such troubles? Why does He allow an illness to disturb our usual routine and cause many people to die? Why does He allow a tragedy to injure a lot of people, while others die, so that many other people are left in sadness? We cannot always tell. But we know from the Bible that, for instance, when Job lost his whole family – besides his herds of camels and other animals and the severe trouble he suffered in his own body – it was to test him: would he trust in God in spite of all that happened? In other cases, we may have to conclude that the trouble has come by way of judgement.

Consider the present situation in Britain and many other countries today. Most people feel that they have no need for God; so they ignore Him; they do not begin to love Him with all their heart, as He has every right to expect. Mankind has been in rebellion against God ever since Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, and people assume that they can live without worshipping Him or even acknowledging that He exists. We should not be surprised when God sends an illness that has affected so many people and when so many more people worry that they are in danger of becoming very seriously ill and perhaps dying.

Many even of those who were brought up well – who were taught from the Bible about God and His ways, who were brought to church and learned

some of the Psalms – have turned from these things. They have followed most other people around them in worshipping the gods of entertainment. They have been distracting themselves from the troubles, and perhaps the weariness, of life with the films and the music of the world, for instance. They have been trying hard to forget God and what they learned about Him. Although public venues have closed because of Covid-19, most people have easy access to any amount of worldly entertainment in their own homes.

When God speaks, not least when He speaks in judgement, there are many lessons we should learn. What should we learn from the Covid-19 pandemic?

1. We should pray that God would protect us from the disease. No matter how dangerous it can be, God is able to keep us from contracting it. And we should ask God to protect others from it and bless those who are suffering from it with a return to health.

2. Covid-19 should remind us of the disease of sin. We very much need to be delivered from sin. While Covid-19 can lead to death, the disease of sin will lead to eternal death if it is not cured. Sin is a spiritual disease and so it is far more dangerous than even Covid-19. How sad that so many people refuse to take sin seriously! What about us?

3. Although there is no proven cure for Covid-19, there is a cure for the disease of sin – a complete cure for all who make use of it. The Son of God came into this world to deliver sinners from sin and its consequences. On the basis of what Christ Jesus did in this world, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of sinners to make them able and willing to trust in Christ Jesus as the Saviour whom God has appointed.

When sinners first trust in Christ, the Spirit begins to deliver them from the power of sin. Because the Spirit has been working in them, they show signs of life, spiritual life. They can use the ears of their souls; so they are ready to listen to what God has to say to them through the Bible. The eyes of their souls are open; in other words, they look to Christ by faith. They open the mouth of their souls and speak to God in prayer. And when they die, the Spirit finishes that work of deliverance from sin. Then the cure of the disease of sin is complete.

4. Not only did Christ come so that sinners can be saved from the disease of sin; He came to deliver them from the *guilt* of sin, to save them from the punishment that would be theirs in a lost eternity. How much then we need to be delivered from the guilt that our sin has brought upon us. What a mercy to hear the gospel call addressed to us, as it was to the jailer in Philippi: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

5. How foolish to refuse and resist the call of the gospel! No one who is seriously ill with some serious physical disease would think of refusing a

sure remedy; they might die if they do not accept help at once. It is even more serious and more foolish to delay seeking the cure for sin; to delay may result in eternal death.

There was once an atheist who had two children, one of whom was called James. Not only was the man suffering from the disease of sin; the disease had such a hold of him that he was a drunkard; he blasphemed God though he did not believe that God existed; and he rejected the teachings of the Bible, making fun of the idea of heaven. But his wife sent the children to a Sabbath school, and James must have made good use of what he learned there. James suffered from the disease of sin, but God drew him into the way of salvation; He put James on the way to recovery.

Poor James became ill. One evening, the father came home from a meeting of atheists and his wife told him: "James is dying".

The father went upstairs. As he looked at James, who was lying in bed, the boy told him: "Father, I am very happy. I am going to heaven. Will you meet me there, Father?" These were James' last words; at once his soul went to heaven and was perfectly well.

Not surprisingly, James' words made a big impression on his father. He tried to get rid of that impression, but he did not succeed; James' words still troubled him. One Sabbath, he drove a group of people a few miles out of town; it is not surprising that someone who rejected the Bible would be a Sabbath-breaker.

Yet he then went to church. The minister read 2 Samuel 12, which tells what David said after his baby boy had died: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me". And God spoke to him through these words.

The man thought, "It is impossible". What did he mean? After living such an ungodly life, including mocking the idea of heaven, it seemed impossible that he could ever meet James in heaven.

He was disturbed, and his disturbed thoughts continued to trouble him. He did not know anyone he could speak to about spiritual things. But one day a missionary called at his house; the missionary listened while the man spoke about his disturbing thoughts. The missionary taught him from the Bible, gave him good advice and prayed for him. And God heard his prayer; God began to cure the father's spiritual illness. He gave up his unbelieving ideas and he began to hope that, after all, he would meet James again, in that world where there is no disease of any kind.

Are you on the way to heaven? If you have reason to believe that you are, pray that God would continue His healing work in your soul. If not, seek the Lord urgently. Pray to Him, for Christ's sake: "Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against Thee" (Psalm 41:4).

A Man Full of Leprosy

Rev K M Watkins

In Bible times, lepers were shut out of the congregation. They were not permitted to enter places of worship. They were banished from the temple and the synagogues. Indeed, they could not enter a town. They had to stay “without the camp”. When Miriam was chastised by being made “leprous, as white as snow” (Numbers 12:10), she was “shut out from the camp” (verse 15). During the famine in Samaria, the four lepers dwelt outside the walls of the city (2 Kings 7:3). “Social distancing” was required of the leper: “he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be” (Leviticus 13:46).

In the days when Jesus was on the earth, there were no doubt many poor lepers in the land of Israel, all shut out from the public worship of God. One of those lepers was in a particularly desperate case, for he was “full of leprosy”. Perhaps others, in whom the disease had not yet developed so far, could try to creep undetected into places where the Lord was worshipped. But this man could not hide the horrible truth. Yet he found a way to meet with Christ, for “when [Jesus] was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean” (Luke 5:12).

In these days of lockdown, we are suffering just a little of the leper's experience. We have to keep our distance from friends and even from family, except those living in our own household. We cannot go out and about as we used to. We cannot assemble together in church. More seriously, we are like the leper in another way. Although we do not have his bodily disease, we do have the spiritual disease that it pictured: the disease of sin. By healing the leper, Christ shows us how He heals sinners from the plague of sin. The leper shows that there is a way for sinners to find the Saviour, even when they cannot get to church, and are feeling unclean, ashamed and afraid.

Firstly, the leper's disease would make him feel *unclean*. “He is a leprous man, he is unclean” (Leviticus 13:44). With his wounds and sores, the leper looked unclean and unwashed. He had to “cry, Unclean, unclean” (verse 45). There are particular sins of uncleanness, when the Seventh Commandment is broken in heart, speech or behaviour. But all sin defiles our souls and makes us unclean before the holy God. Therefore we should all confess our sinfulness to God in the words of the leper: “Unclean, unclean”.

However many tears of repentance we shed or good works we try to do, we cannot wash away the filthiness of our sin, but in the gospel “there is a fountain opened . . . for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1). “The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth from all sin” (1 John 1:7). By

His death, the Saviour has provided the way for souls to be washed from sin. Although we cannot attend church, we may still approach Christ Himself, saying, "Thou canst make me clean". Let us go to Him directly, with the words of Psalm 51:

Me cleanse from sin, and throughly wash from mine iniquity:
For my transgressions I confess; my sin I ever see.

Do Thou with hyssop sprinkle me, I shall be cleansed so;
Yea, wash Thou me, and then I shall be whiter than the snow.

Secondly, the leper's disease would make him feel *ashamed*. He would feel unfit to be among people or come into the Lord's house. "He shall put a covering upon his upper lip" (Leviticus 13:45), as if it was a shame for him to use his lips and to speak, even to say, "Unclean, unclean". Our sin should make us all feel like this. Ezra confessed, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra 9:6).

But the leper's sense of shame did not stop him coming to Christ. Somehow he found a way to get near to Him. Somehow he found a way to open his mouth and pray to the Saviour for help. Though he felt ashamed, he felt his need of Christ's help even more.

The devil has various ways to keep us from coming to the Saviour. One is to tell us that our sins are small, so we have little or nothing to be ashamed of. Then we ignore our guilt and never seek Christ to save us from our sin. "They that are whole have no need of the physician" (Mark 2:17). This is a most dangerous place to be in. The little boy who loves playing in the mud is filthy, but he feels no shame about it.

Another way the devil keeps us from coming to Christ is to tell us that our sins are too shameful to ask Christ for healing. What a liar the devil is! It is the sick who need the physician! A person is very foolish if he refuses to go to the doctor because he is too ashamed of the disease that is killing him. The gospel Physician is most willing to heal every sinner who comes to Him! Christ did not turn away this leper, even though he was "full of leprosy", and He will not turn us away either.

Thirdly, the leper's disease made him feel *afraid*. He knew that it was getting worse and worse. He could feel that it was at work deep within his body. He knew that it would soon bring death. His case had become desperate, and if he did not obtain healing soon, it would be too late. He had every reason to be greatly afraid. No wonder he had to find a way to come to Christ for healing!

The disease of sin is like leprosy. It gets worse and worse. As the years

go by, we do not become better people, but worse. Even if we leave one sin, we turn to others. Good if we came to the point where we could not see anything in ourselves but our sin! Good if we could use these words to describe ourselves: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isaiah 1:6). This should make us afraid!

Like leprosy, the disease of sin is at work within us. All our actual transgressions come from our desperately wicked and deceitful hearts. David had committed terrible sins, but when he confessed it to the Lord in Psalm 51, he traced their evil source to his own corrupt nature:

Behold, I in iniquity was formed the womb within;
My mother also me conceived in guiltiness and sin.

This also should make us afraid. In Psalm 38, David confessed that the disease of sin was lodged inside his soul, like leprosy was lodged deep within a man's body:

For a disease that loathsome is so fills my loins with pain,
That in my weak and weary flesh no soundness doth remain.

Every wicked thing we do comes from our own hearts. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Like the leper's skin, which would have lost the sense of touch, our hearts grow harder. Perhaps we know this already. The message of the Bible does not affect us the way it used to. The terrors of the law do not alarm us. The grace of the gospel does not move us. This is because the disease of sin has grown worse. And this should frighten us!

If a man's leprosy was not cured, in the end he would die of it. Being diagnosed with it was a death sentence. If we were told we had a bodily disease that was going to kill us, how desperate we would be to find a cure! How concerned we would be! But when we are told that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) and "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20), we act as if it was nothing to worry about too much. What madness! The spiritual disease of sin is a sentence of death. If we are not healed, it will destroy us with everlasting destruction.

The leper who came to Christ was getting closer and closer to death. Time was running out. Perhaps he was tempted to think that coming to the Saviour would be easier at some time in the future. But Christ might never come to his city again. He needed to be healed of his leprosy that very day. And so

he was. We should never put off meeting Christ to another day. Perhaps you are saying it will be easier to find Him when you can go to church again. But no one has any guarantee that they will be in church again. Sin is already working death.

Let the leper be an example to us all. He could not go to Christ's house, but still He came to Christ. Now is the time for us to seek the Lord. Now is the time to come to Him for healing, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make *me* clean". If you do so, the result will be the same for you as it was for the leper: "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed" (Mark 1:41,42).

Counted Innocent in Heaven's Court

4. What Does "*To Impute*" Mean?

Rev J R Tallach

This is the last section of a Youth Conference paper on the Bible's teaching about justification. Last month's article spoke about the connection between faith and good works.

The term *to impute* is used both for laying the sins of the sinner on Christ and laying the righteousness of Christ on the sinner. A A Hodge in his book on the *Confession of Faith* has these helpful words: "The Scriptures affirm that this righteousness is *imputed* to the believer in the act of justification. The phrase 'to impute sin' or 'righteousness', in its scriptural usage, signifies simply to set to one's account, to lay to one's charge or credit as the ground of judicial process. Our sins are said to be laid on Christ: 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:6). This was because their guilt was so charged to His account that they were justly punished in Him.

"In like manner Christ's righteousness is imputed, or its rewardableness is so credited, to the believer that all the covenanted honours and rewards of a perfect righteousness henceforth rightly belong to him. 'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (Romans 4:4,5)." Paul goes on to quote David writing in Psalm 32: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered".

Calvin states in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: "A man will be justified by faith when, excluded by the righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold on the righteousness of Christ and, clothed in it, appears in the sight of God, not as a sinner, but righteous".

Justification is an act of God, as judge, pardoning sins. Sinners are accepted, in the presence of God, into His favour. That is why the doctrine of justification leads on to the doctrine of adoption. The sins of the prodigal son were forgiven and he was received graciously; he was then brought into the father's house as a son of the home and rejoiced over as a lost son who had been found.

Justification is decisive for eternity. It is as though the Judgement Day is brought forward. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). This is a peace which the Judgement Day will not disturb, rather it will then be gloriously affirmed, with the invitation to every justified sinner: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord".

There is an exchange between Christ and His people. By becoming man, Christ took bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; He became the last Adam acting on behalf of sinners, so that they may share His glory at last. "God", says Paul, "hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." He made Himself of no reputation so that His people might be had in everlasting remembrance (Psalm 112:6). The steps of Christ are glorious on behalf of His people: He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, living the life of a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, dying on the cross, rising the third day according to the Scriptures, and reigning in heaven as the gracious Saviour of His people.

Christ's death satisfied God's justice for the sins of His people; He offered Himself to God instead of their sins being punished in their own persons. This offering was made at His Father's bidding. "Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

The Father sent His Son and laid on Him all the sins of His people. Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit; David murdered and committed adultery; Peter denied his Master, Paul persecuted and blasphemed. God the Father laid all these sins on the Son. Luther, as justified, says of Christ: "I see no sin but in Him. Therefore let Him die on the cross."

Calvin speaks of the punishment of our sins awaiting us at a judgement

seat; so Christ was before Pilate to be judged and condemned as the Sin-bearer. In His innocence He was taking the guilt of others. So their guilt was transferred to the head of Another. He substituted for them at every point. This was a true substitution, “made sin for us”, to bear in His soul the torments of the guilty party. It was the height of divine grace.

Faith in these central truths is our act, but not our work. The Holy Spirit of God works faith in the heart. We are to hear by the ear of faith, take by the hand of faith, walk spiritually by the feet of faith and come up from the wilderness leaning (exercising faith) on the Beloved of the Church. Faith is centred on Christ; it is not man-centred. The hope that accompanies faith goes outside the believer. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul . . . which entereth into that within the veil” (Hebrews 6:19), “where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). By faith we are directly joined to Him, no other mediator coming between.

The Unlikeliest Man in the Town

The minister had preached for some years without seeing anyone converted in the congregation. He felt very discouraged and often said, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought” (Isaiah 49:4). In this American congregation, there was a man of almost 80. When the minister took a service near this man’s home, he would usually come to listen, but he was unconverted; when he was angry, he would use bad language; and he thought nothing of working on Sabbath, at least when it was the time for making hay and bringing in the harvest.

When God began to change the hearts of some people in the congregation, the old man was one of those who described those who professed to be believers as deceivers and hypocrites. The minister felt that this was the unlikeliest man in the town to be converted.

One afternoon, when the minister had arranged to preach in a house near the old man’s home, he saw that the man was one of those who had gathered. This left the minister uncomfortable, though afterwards he was sorry for his attitude; he knew that it was an unbelieving attitude; he should have trusted in God’s power to save. The minister knew that some who had gathered were seeking the salvation of their souls and that others had found salvation. But he had no expectation that the old man would be influenced by the truth of God’s Word; the minister seems to have viewed him as someone who was very much opposed to the truth.

But the minister was underestimating the power of God to subdue a

sinner's heart, even the heart of a sinner who was very much opposed to the truth. After preaching for some time, the minister felt that the Holy Spirit was working in the hearts of some of the people. And after the service, the minister spoke to the old man, although he was afraid that the man would reply in an insulting way. The minister told him as kindly as he could: "You are now a very old man, and you cannot expect to live long. If God should call you soon and suddenly, do you think you are prepared to die?"

In an unfriendly tone, the old man said that some people had told him that the minister would explain that afternoon which churches were right and which were wrong. But that was not the minister's purpose; that day he had come to preach the gospel. So he urged the man to come to Christ without delay, reminding him of the words, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

As they parted, the old man shook the minister's hand and told him: "If I said anything to hurt your feelings, I am sorry for it; I hope you will forgive me and I want you to pray for me". And large tears rolled down his cheeks. The minister now began to hope that God's Spirit was striving with the old man and that he might be brought to Christ, even at this late stage in his life. The minister went home feeling glad that there were some signs that God was working, and he prayed that no one might say, as Felix did to Paul, "Go thy way for this time".

Perhaps, when people use such words, there is always something of a promise to attend to the needs of their soul at some later time. But too often that promise is broken, and it is very dangerous to resist any impression that God's Word makes on our hearts. Remember that there is no suggestion that Felix ever again thought seriously about his spiritual needs. Remember too what the Bible says about "the accepted time", the time that is acceptable to God for seeking Him and for believing in Christ.

A few evenings later, the minister preached in a school in the same district. His text was: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee". As soon as the service was over, the old man spoke out: "My neighbours and friends, God has often called me in judgement and in mercy, and I feel that He is calling me this evening for the last time". He could say no more; he was too upset. And some who had come to the service to mock left it to pray. Some began to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; others believed that God had given them faith in Jesus Christ and had pardoned their sins.

But what about the old man? For nearly a fortnight he went on seeking the Lord, mourning over his sins and praying. Then, said the minister, "the burden of sin was removed. He felt that, old and hardened in sin as he was, God for Christ's sake had pardoned his sin, and he had a joy and peace in

believing which the world could not take away. The Bible, preaching, praying, Christians – everything connected with the gospel – appeared in a new and attractive light. He loved everybody, he said, and desired their salvation. All things had passed away; all things had become new.” God had shown that He is able to save the most unlikely of sinners.

The change in the old man’s life was so great that no one doubted that he had experienced a change of heart. The change was no temporary one; it continued for the remaining eight years of his life. He would walk more than five miles to church to hear the preaching of the gospel. He was generous in supporting his own congregation and in giving money to send the Bible to poor people and to send out missionaries. He would buy religious magazines, tracts and books; he would listen to them being read to him (probably he had never learned to read); then he would pass them around the families in the district.

We should notice the goodness of God in saving a man who had gone on for so long hardening his heart against God and ignoring his need to be delivered from the wrath to come. But let no one presume on God’s goodness. Remember again the verse that speaks of “the accepted time”, which is *now*. God is calling us now to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ – not at some other time away in the indefinite future. Let us grasp the urgency of coming to Christ at once, before it is too late. The old man did what he could to serve God for the last eight years of his life. But how much more he might have done if he had not been so careless about his soul for so long – if he had spent his whole life in the service of God. God is saying: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6). He is telling us to seek Him *now*, to call on Him *now*.

The Tabernacle and Temple

3. What We Are to Learn

Rev J B Jardine

Last month’s part of this Youth Conference paper told about the second temple, built after the Jews began to return from captivity in Babylon.

3. The typology of the tabernacle and temple. The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New. His character has not changed; His law is the same. The plan of salvation, in all its principles and arrangements, stresses the same covenant relationship between God and His people. The symbols and ceremonies of the temple outlined the basic teachings of Christianity. The temple represents the union of God with man – that is,

the man Christ Jesus. It all had its fulfilment in Him who tabernacled with man, and who, “by a greater and more perfect tabernacle”, obtained eternal redemption for the Church of God (Hebrews 9:11).

The truths set forth in the temple were veiled under types and shadows, as the kernel in the nut, or as the shadow resembles the substance. What is a type? A type is a thing or a person that is used to represent a spiritual truth, and the fulfilment of that spiritual truth – in its antitype – belongs to the future. The type resembles the antitype, is inferior to it and prefigures it. An example would be the high priest who was appointed by God to represent Christ; the high priest resembles Him, was inferior to Him and prefigures Him – by God's appointment.

The type must have a historical basis in Scripture and resemble the antitype clearly. There must be proper evidence that God appointed it as a type. Anything that is sinful cannot be a type. We will now look at some of the types in the temple. We must remain careful to avoid being carried away in the interpretations we make.

We will first look at *the court of the sanctuary* (outside the temple).

(1.) *The altar of burnt offering*. This was “the slaughtering place”; it was the most important article connected with the sanctuary, as nothing could be done without it. The altar was elevated to emphasise the direction and scope of its sacrifices. It was made of unhewn stone, to show that man's workmanship was to be dispensed with at the point, where God was to show mercy to His people through the death of a substitute.

The altar was always fed with the sacrifice of life, which was consumed by a never-dying fire. There was no approach to God without a sacrifice. The altar would continually remind the spiritually-exercised Israelite about sin and its punishment and of the mercy of God in accepting the sinner through the death of the innocent victim.

The fire of the altar represented the holiness of God. He testified of His approval by accepting the remedy, the sacrifice He had provided to meet the needs of the sinner. It was the meeting place between God and His people, where they were restored to fellowship with Him, through the shed blood. In this we see that it was a type of Christ the Mediator.

The death of Christ at Calvary was appointed from all eternity, to be the place where the real sacrifice was to be offered; from it comes unspeakable and everlasting effectiveness. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is a source of consolation for all time, and for all worshippers who by faith gather to receive assurance of forgiveness of sin and fellowship with God.

(2.) *The brazen laver*. The laver was made of bronze and contained water for purifying. The priests were forbidden, on pain of death, to serve at the

altar or in the holy place, in the temple, without first washing their hands and feet. Their hands were used to offer various sacrifices, and their feet trod on holy ground. We must remember that all the priests ministered barefoot.

It is a fit symbol of the grace that believers need if they are to perform all their holy duties in the things of God in the right spirit. The priests would have been reminded of their personal sinfulness by this constant reminder of their need to purify themselves before the beginning of their holy services. The washing spoke of the need of inward cleansing or “the washing of regeneration” or the purification of the soul by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

Second we will look at *the holy place, or sanctuary*. This represented what the people of God were to God, in their worship and obedience. It had no windows and contained three main items:

(1.) *The table of shewbread* (or, showbread). The table was made of wood overlaid with gold and was placed on the right hand side of the holy place. This was the provision table where the children of Israel, through the priests, placed their offerings before the Lord. The bread was replaced every Sabbath. The 12 loaves represented the 12 tribes of the children of Israel and acknowledged their dependence on God as the giver of the staff of life. By always lying on the table, the shewbread was a constant memorial of God’s goodness in providing for His people. The bread was to be “from the Children of Israel by an everlasting covenant” (Leviticus 24:8).

This shewbread, “bread of the presence”, symbolised the Jews’ union with God and the fact that their spiritual and temporal wellbeing was dependent on Him. The bread was a material token of their gratitude and love. It was acceptable and well pleasing to Him when presented in an orderly way. But, in order to show their indebtedness to Him, and to show their appreciation of His protection, and His care and provision for them, they were to labour spiritually that they might present to Him the fruits of a spiritual life.

It must also have been a figure of Christ. Christ declared, “I am the bread of life”. We must feed upon Him by faith so that our souls may be nourished to eternal life. We must pray, “Lord, evermore give us this bread”. He is continually available to His people.

(2.) *The candlestick* (or, menorah). The candlestick, with its seven lights, was placed on the opposite side of the holy place to the table of shewbread. It was there to provide light for the priests ministering in the holy place. It burned day and night. This seven-branched candlestick symbolised God’s continued presence and ongoing covenant relationship with Israel. It was a symbol of the need for spiritual and moral illumination by the Spirit of God. Oil in Scripture is a symbol of the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The light from the candlestick was fed from “pure olive oil beaten for

the light, to cause the lamp to burn always" (Exodus 27:20). It prefigures the divine glory shining on and through the Lord's people. The Church of God is called "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14) and believers "the children of light" (John 12:36).

(3.) *The altar of incense.* This altar was placed just before the curtain at the entrance of the Most Holy Place. The incense was a symbol of prayer, or intercession. The Gospel of Matthew emphasises public prayer outside the temple. Those in Jerusalem, or outside the city, were to pray towards the temple and those praying in the temple were to pray towards the most holy place (1 Kings 8:30).

(4.) *The veil.* The colour of the materials used in the veil of the tabernacle was different from the colour used in the temple. The veil in the tabernacle was scarlet and was typical of the royal dignity of the Son of man as born of the Jews. In the temple it was crimson, an emblem of the fruitfulness, excellence and glory of the risen Christ.

The veil of the Most Holy Place was a handbreadth thick and woven out of 72 twisted plaids. Each plaid was made from 24 threads. It would have been impossible for the veil to have rent naturally when the Lord of the temple died on the cross. It represented the flesh of Christ which was rent in two on the cross. Through this a "new and living way" was made for sinners to the Father (Hebrews 10:20). This provides clear proof that the death of Christ brought an end to the need for the temple and its rituals. By entering through the veil, the high priest symbolically entered into the true heaven as represented by the most holy place.

For Junior Readers

Ready to Die?

I am sure you have often heard the words *epidemic* and *pandemic* over these past few months! Yet Covid-19 is by no means the first epidemic to affect our country. Flu epidemics, cholera and (in the 1300s) the Black Death or bubonic plague, all caused the death of many thousands, even millions of people.

In the nineteenth century, cholera was an illness which spread rapidly and caused many deaths. The worst outbreak was in a poor area of London in the 1850s. Little was known at that time about the cause of the disease or how to avoid it, but during this epidemic, in 1858, a British doctor called John Snow realised that it was spread by water that had been infected. In spite of this, 23 000 people died in Britain that year.

As you will know from history lessons, there was no proper health care in these days. People sickened and died in their own homes, with no medicine to help them. Often the families of the sick would call on ministers to visit those who were ill and to pray with them. At that time there was a young minister in London called Charles Spurgeon, just 20 years old. Family after family in his congregation were affected, and he went from house to house praying with the sick, and also taking funerals.

One night he was wakened at 3 am by a ring of the door bell. He was asked to visit a dying man. When he got to the house, he recognised the man as someone who had, when he was well, refused Christ and even mocked the minister. Although he spoke to him, the man was already becoming unconscious and he then died. There was no time for him to repent. He had wasted all the opportunities which God had previously granted him, and now it was too late!

Very soon afterwards, Spurgeon was called out again, this time to see a young woman. But what a different situation was here! She also was near to death; she was saying goodbye to her father. But she was singing, and telling her brothers and sisters to seek the Lord and to follow her to heaven. She was prepared for eternity.

Spurgeon said that he had never seen more clearly in his life the difference between someone who fears God and someone who does not fear Him. Would you not wish to be like the young woman whose hope was in the Saviour of sinners and so was not afraid to leave this world behind?

What does the Bible tell you? "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord; and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

J van Kralingen

For Younger Readers

The Doctor's Story

An old doctor, whose name was Jim, said to some boys: "I have a little story to tell you".

One day, when he was a boy, young Jim met his father on the road to town. His father asked him to take a packet into the town. Jim was about 12 and did not much like working. He had been working hard in the hay field since early morning. He was now tired and dusty and hungry.

He was not pleased to have to walk two miles into town after a hard day's work. He wanted to go home for his meal. His first thought was to say, No. But something changed his mind. It was God who kept him from disobeying his kind, loving father.

So Jim said, "Of course, Father, I'll take it". He gave his scythe to one of the men and took the package. His father told him: "Thank you, Jim. I was going myself, but somehow I don't feel very strong today." Jim and his father walked together for a little. As they parted, the father put his hand on Jim's shoulder and said, "Thank you, my son. You have always been a good boy to me, Jim."

Jim hurried away to the town and then back home again. When he had almost reached his house, he saw some men about the door. One of them came to tell him: "Your father fell down dead just as he reached the door of his home. The last words he spoke were those he said to you in parting."

How glad the doctor was that he obeyed and honoured his father that last time they were together! And, even after all these years, he thanked God for helping him to do so.

You should ask God to help you obey and honour your father and mother. Remember God's commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee".

Only One Priest

A young woman in Italy was ill, and people thought she was going to die. Her friends wanted to send for a priest. But she did not believe he could do her any good. She said, "No, I don't want to see a priest. He didn't die for sinners. Christ only is my Saviour. I love Jesus Christ because He first loved me."

She had learned something very important: that she could not be saved from her sins by anything she could do to save herself, or what any other human being could do for her. She had to look to Christ, who is *the* Priest. He offered Himself up as a sacrifice that could really take away sin. No other priest could do anything to take away sin, no matter what claims he may make about himself and his powers. Christ is calling *us* to look to Him.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2019-20

UK Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Barnoldswick:* Claudia van Essen. *Brighton:* Katharine Hills. *Beaully:* Deborah MacLean. *Dingwall:* Esther Ross. *Edinburgh:* Fraser Morrison. *Glasgow:* Rebecca Smith. *Inverness:* Victoria Maton. *London:* David and John Munns. *North Harris:* Hannah Jardine. *North Tolsta:* Ruth Morrison. *Tonbridge:* Joseph Playfoot.

Intermediate Section: *Barnoldswick:* Calvin Middleton. *Dingwall:* Lydia Ross. *Glasgow:* Cameron Ross. *Halkirk:* Annelise Hymers-Mackintosh, Sarah Stewart. *Inverness:* Lois Maton. *Llanelli:* Jonathan Cran. *London:* Sarah Munns. *North Tolsta:* Angus Morrison.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Julia Macleod. *Barnoldswick:* Isaac Fisher, Jael Fisher, Bethan Middleton, Daniel van Essen. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell, Thomas Ross. *Halkirk:* Donald MacLean. *Glasgow:* Elena MacLennan, Hugh Ross. *Inverness:* Jenna Campbell. *Llanelli:* Carys Cran. *North Tolsta:* Uilleam Morrison. *Southampton:* Chloe Wilkins. *Ullapool:* Tacita Angell.

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

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

Looking Around Us

The Most Valuable Treasures in All of Christianity?

Some months ago *Time* magazine celebrated “Heroes” of the year. Among them were two men from Paris who braved the destructive fire in Notre Dame

Cathedral to rescue the “treasures” that were preserved there. In the darkness, the magazine states, they aimed “to rescue some of the most valuable treasures in all of Christianity”. The “valuable treasures” in this Roman Catholic building included Christ’s crown of thorns, as well as pieces of wood and a nail from the cross. At least, that is what is claimed about them.

Clearly these men acted bravely in getting these articles away from the burning cathedral, but did they not risk their lives unnecessarily? That these articles are genuine is very unlikely indeed. John Calvin, the Reformer of Geneva, pointed out that, in his time, every town claimed to have a piece of the cross; there were larger pieces in Paris, Rome and elsewhere. And he adds, “If all the pieces which could be found were collected into a heap, they would form a good shipload, though the Gospel testifies that a single individual was able to carry” the cross.

Obviously not all of these relics could possibly be genuine. In fact, it is most unlikely that any of them were genuine. They were kept, not as people preserve historical objects in a museum – but, says Calvin, to stimulate people to idolatry. Pieces of wood, supposed to be from the cross, were foolishly declared to be “every way worthy of adoration”.

We have the example of how Hezekiah dealt with the brazen serpent. Because the Israelites were burning incense to it, treating it as a god, he broke it in pieces, so that no one would ever again be able to use it in an idolatrous way. In the same way, Roman Catholic relics are dangerous because people are tempted to use them to commit idolatry. So none of these relics was worth anyone risking his life to preserve it.

So what is Christianity’s most valuable treasure? The most valuable object is the Bible. It is all true; it is a revelation from God. It tells us about the realities of human life; it shows us that we are sinners and that we deserve to be punished for ever because of our sins. But, wonderfully, the Bible tells us that there is a way to be delivered from that punishment, for God sent His own Son into the world to save sinners. And everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life (see John 3:16).

Presumably everyone who reads this has easy access to a Bible without risking their life to read it. Make sure then that you do read it. Read it as a message from God to *you* – a very valuable message. Read it carefully; read it prayerfully.

But you are in great danger if you neglect it, especially its vital message about sin and salvation. Do not risk your eternal future by neglecting the Bible and despising your soul.

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