

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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



***November 2022***

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## The Young People's Magazine

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# The Young People's Magazine

Volume 87

November 2022

Number 11

## The Poor Man's Friend

Several weeks ago, I heard a minister speak about Christ as the poor man's friend. He was right. Christ *is* the poor man's friend. How often Christ has shown Himself a friend to those who were hungry and asked Him to provide them with food! Long ago, a poor, old, grey-haired man came to the house of a wealthy merchant, who was standing at his door. The poor man asked him for some money, but the merchant answered him roughly. He asked: "Why do you live so useless a life?"

The beggar explained that, because of his age, he was no longer able to work. But he went on: "I have committed myself to the providence of God and the kindness of good people".

At that time, the rich man was rejecting the Bible; he did not believe that, in Scripture, God has revealed what we need to know about spiritual things; he did not accept that the Bible is true. The merchant ordered the old man to go away and made some ungodly remarks about God's providence.

The old man made his way down the steps that led away from the merchant's house. He was disturbed by the merchant's unbelief; so he stopped at the bottom of the steps, knelt down and prayed, "O my gracious God, I thank Thee that my bread and water are sure". The man had faith to believe that God would provide for him, as one of His children, what he needed to eat and drink. He believed that Christ was the friend of a poor man like himself. But he wanted the Lord to remember this man because of what he had said about providence. He was not looking for revenge because the rich man had snubbed him, but he wished that God would show mercy to the rich man. So he asked, "Father, forgive him; he knows not what he says".

The merchant could hear what the beggar was saying, and the words, "Father, forgive him; he knows not what he says," kept ringing in his ears. The next day, the merchant had to attend to some business in a nearby town. As he rode along the road, he overtook the beggar. The rich man confessed afterwards that the sight of the beggar terrified him. He was overwhelmed with guilt and fear. He knew that he had treated the man badly.

Yet he came off his horse and spoke with the old man for some time. The

old man finished by saying, "Yesterday I was hungry and called at the door of a rich man. He was angry and told me he did not believe in the providence of God and told me to depart. But at the next house I had a plentiful meal, and this . . . was at the house of a poor woman."

The poor man's words pierced the rich man's soul with a sense that he was guilty. He then gave some money to the poor man and continued his journey. But the merchant was never able to find out anything more about him. Yet the words, "Father, forgive him; he knows not what he says," still followed him. They never left him till God brought him, not only to repent of his sin against the beggar, but also of his sins against God Himself.

God can make rich men and women His friends also. He can bring people of every kind to be His friends. But He brings them all to realise that, spiritually, they are very poor indeed – so poor that they have no good thing to bring before God in the hope of making Him favourable to them.

This is true of everyone: all that we do is sinful; even our best deeds have sin in them. It is important to remember that it is not only our outward actions that are sinful; our thoughts also are sinful. God requires us to love Him with all our heart. If we have love to Him, it should have no defect at all. That is a very high standard. And it means that no one in this fallen world can do anything, say anything, or think anything, without sinning. How very poor we all are!

This might well leave us without any hope for the future and, most seriously, without any hope for eternity. But there is hope. No matter how poor we may be spiritually, Christ is still the friend of those who are poor sinners. We are to go to Him as sinners, who cannot save themselves; we are too poor for that. Yet He calls us to come to Him "without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). We have nothing to use as payment for our salvation – even as part-payment, even as a tiny fraction of the payment.

Yes, a price did have to be paid so that sinners could be saved. But it was the poor man's Friend who paid that price, and it was indeed a terrible price that Christ had to pay. It involved fearful suffering, ending only with His death. In His sufferings, He endured the full punishment due to poor sinners. He came into this world as their Friend, to deliver them from their guilt, so that they would not have to suffer the punishment they deserved. How wonderful was the love of that Friend!

The Bible tells us to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" and be saved. How ungrateful we are if we pay no attention to that great salvation which is freely offered to us, and how rebellious if we reject it!

Even although they have come by faith to Christ, God's children are still poor; they have no resources of their own. But Christ, the Friend of the poor,



has pronounced them blessed. He has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). They will always be poor in this life; yet they are rich – not rich in themselves, but in Christ. They have treasures in heaven which can never be exhausted; these treasures will never run out. God's children have been brought into the kingdom of heaven and all the resources of that kingdom are theirs. (*The kingdom of heaven means the same as the kingdom of God.*)

God's children can always go to Christ as spiritually poor, to ask Him for all that they need. Paul told the believers in Philippi: "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Christ's riches are without limit. From these riches, He will supply all the needs of His friends.

It makes no sense for His friends to stay away from Him and try to struggle through this world as well as they can. It makes complete sense for them to go to Him continually, to be totally dependent on Him in all their circumstances. He will never turn His people away, whatever their needs are. He may not always give them what they ask, but if He says, No, to a particular request, we can be sure that He will instead give them something better. He knows better, far better, than they do what they really need. There is no limit to His friendship towards them. He knows exactly what they need, and that is what He will give them.

It should be obvious that it does not make any sense for sinners to stay away from the Friend of sinners. They will all meet difficulties in this world; some will meet more and others fewer. But how can anyone expect to be carried through these difficulties if they do not personally know the Good Shepherd, who is the Friend of poor sinners? The Good Shepherd leads His sheep safely through their difficulties, for He gives them grace to trust in Him. But without relying on Christ, we should not assume that we will ever take the wisest approach to the difficulties and dangers that come our way.

Most significantly, there is that dangerous event that we know as death. We cannot be safe in approaching death unless we have found Christ as the Friend of poor sinners. If we have found Him, we will enter heaven at once; we will enjoy for ever the complete blessedness to be found there, in Christ's presence. If we reach heaven, we will never again be poor; we will be eternally rich, because of Christ.

If sinners do not find Christ in this world, they can have no real hope – no hope that they can rely on – of getting to heaven. They must go down to the awful sufferings of a lost eternity. Let us seek now the Friend of the poor, before it is too late. He is calling us: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

## The Last Days of a Gambler

This story is taken from an old magazine and edited. It was written by a "district visitor", who would have gone round some area calling on those who were in need and trying to help those particularly who were in spiritual need.

**I**t was in the autumn of 1852 that I first saw John stretched out on his bed. He was suffering from some illness. Beside him sat his little Annie, a child of about 10. Care and sorrow had already put their mark on a face which, even in its beauty, looked so much older than you would expect a 10-year-old to look. Her long fair hair hung over her pale cheeks; and the traces of tears, scarcely dried, were clearly to be seen. My curiosity and interest were aroused, and I inquired into the circumstances of the case.

The man, who could not be less than 70, lay exhausted, and seemed to be unconscious. But I learned from the woman of the house that the father and his child had come the day before from a nearby town. He had spent his life gambling, and the ruling thought, strong even to the last, had forced him to be present during the horse races which were going on, and which for many years he had always attended.

The journey had so exhausted him that he reached the town more dead than alive. The inn where he used to stay was full. Its doors had once been open to him when his sin had brought gain to the innkeeper, but they were now closed to him. Leaning on his child, who dragged rather than supported him, he had turned wearily away, and walked a few steps down the street. Pity for his exhausted condition led the woman of the house where he now was to invite them in and offer them a night's lodging.

I sat down beside the bed and spoke to him of the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness – Jesus, the Friend of sinners. But he only shook his head, as if to say, "Too late!" Day by day I visited him, and by degrees learned more about his state of mind. His conscience was awakened, but he had not found the way to peace. He could see God's broken law; he knew that he was dying; he could see, and almost feel beforehand, the torments of hell. But as yet he could not see that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". "O," he said one day, "if I could only believe that Jesus would save me! But I have sinned past forgiveness; it is too late, too late!"

His nights were fearful. He imagined he saw around him those whom he had led into sin, and he would cry out with such words as these: "I am dying! What is death? Where am I going? The devil has got me! He is dragging me down to hell, and I see them all, all – there, there! They are beckoning to me! They call me to join their company! No, no, I am not ready yet! Let me go! Let me go!"

These nights of horror were followed by days when he was argumentative and irritable, and all Annie's efforts to please him had no success. One day, when she was tired, and trembling with fear, she stopped him doing something foolish. This annoyed him so much that he hit her hard. Rushing out of the house, she threw herself in front of a man whom, by his appearance, she took to be a minister. She exclaimed, "O sir, save me from my father!"

He was touched by her distress, took her by the hand, and went with her to the house. Long and earnest were the prayers he offered up for the soul of the dying man; he exhorted him often to repent of his sins and turn to the Saviour for pardon, even now when he was so near death.

At last it pleased God to touch the heart of this poor sinner with the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. One day, after I had been speaking to him of the love of Jesus, he exclaimed, "There was something they said to me the other day", mentioning by name the minister and another visitor; "there was something they said about Jesus that went right to my heart – here," striking his breast; "but I have been such an obstinate sinner."

My talks with this poor man drew towards their close. With that restlessness that went along with his state of mind, he insisted on being removed to a village some miles away, where his mother and other members of his family had been buried. He declared he could not die unless he was taken there. With great difficulty he got half dressed, but then fainted. For two days he lay in his clothes, not able to move, but still determined to go.

At last, with much effort, he was brought to the station and set out on the journey of a few hours to the town nearest to the village on which all his earthly hopes seemed fixed. Here a cart was hired to carry him and Annie. Evening was closing in. It was a cold October evening when they arrived at the village. Alone and unprotected, they applied in vain for shelter. No one would give even a night's lodging to the dying father and his helpless child. It was only through the kind intervention of a local minister that the people of the little inn in the village were persuaded to take them in for one night. John died the next day. His last words were, "Lord, remember me".

This account of the ill man should teach us that there is no limit to God's power to save sinners, no matter how far away from Him they are. Yet there is a danger of reading about John and then telling yourself that you can leave off seeking salvation till the very end of your life.

But you may die long before you expect to; you cannot be at all sure that God will allow you to have a long life. And how awful to pass into eternity without Christ, so that you will have to bear the punishment of your sins for ever. God is telling you to seek Him now. So you must obey Him and look to Christ Jesus as the Saviour of sinners. He is calling you: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

## A Reformation Tour

### 6. St Andrews – George Wishart

*Rev David Campbell*

This year's Youth Conference included a tour of Reformation sites, mainly in St Andrews. The previous article described the life and martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton, the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation. As noted earlier, others before him in earlier centuries held some of the Reformed doctrines. Hamilton's death moved others to confess the same principles as he suffered for. The next prominent martyr of the Reformation period was George Wishart. A paper on his life was given at the Youth Conference, so this article will only cover the events of his imprisonment and death at St Andrews.

**7. St Andrews Castle.** Our tour will now take us along The Scores to St Andrews Castle. Because of repairs there, we are unable to visit the Castle, but it is a worthwhile place to visit for its historical associations with the Scottish Reformation, particularly with the witness of George Wishart and of John Knox.

George Wishart was taken captive by the Earl of Bothwell at Ormiston House, in East Lothian. He was taken from there to various places of confinement and eventually was imprisoned for over a month in the infamous Bottle Dungeon in the Castle of St Andrews. This dreadful place, carved out of solid rock and in the shape of a bottle with only a narrow neck at the opening, can still be seen as it was in Wishart's time. His persecutor, Cardinal Beaton, lived in luxury and excess while the servant of God languished in this dark hole some yards away. The remains of the Castle preserve the history of Wishart and it is fitting to recall the sufferings of such a worthy man under its walls.

Wishart was taken for trial in the Cathedral, and John Foxe's account shows that the process used led to a foregone conclusion. For each of the accusations laid against him, no opportunity was given to him to answer it or prove his case in his own defence. The defences he did offer were ignored and he was condemned to death as a heretic. The genuine piety and marked godliness of George Wishart greatly endeared him to the people, and the doctrines he taught were by this time finding considerable support. He had been faithful in his life and would now prove faithful even to death for the sake of the truths he loved and the Saviour he served. George Wishart suffered on 1 March 1546 – 18 years to the day after Patrick Hamilton suffered.

Watching from a window of the Castle, opposite the place of execution, the Cardinal and his lordly bishops leaned on cushions as though at some

place of entertainment. Cannons were directed at the martyr for fear that friends would try to rescue him. Wishart urged the people observing the terrible sight not to be ashamed of the Word of God nor of his sufferings. He prayed for his false accusers, forgave his judges and, when the executioner asked for his forgiveness, he kissed him and freely forgave him.

He suffered a painful death in the flames. Before he died he was heard to say in response to someone who exhorted him to recant (repent of his principles): "This flame occasions trouble to my body, indeed; but it hath in no wise broken my spirit. But he who now so proudly looks down upon me from yonder lofty place (pointing to the Cardinal) shall, ere long, be ignominiously [with shame] thrown down, as now he proudly lolls at his ease." The initials of Wishart's name (GW) are marked on the roadside directly opposite the Castle window and identify the spot at which the martyrdom took place.

The prediction of Wishart came to pass not long after his death, on 29 May 1546, when friends of the Reformed cause and a number of Fife land-owners, led by Norman Leslie of Rothes, broke into the Castle early one morning and murdered the Cardinal. A poet of the period, Sir David Lyndsay, wrote what was true of this event:

"As for the cardinal, I grant  
He was a man we weel could want,  
And we'll forget him soon;  
And yet I think, the sooth to say,  
Although the loon is weel away,  
The deed was foully done."

His body lay for seven months in the bottle dungeon preserved in salt for a time before being disposed of in an unknown grave. John Foxe says that "at last like a carrion [a dead animal] he was buried in a dunghill".

Those who took over the Castle did so for civil as well as religious liberty from the tyranny of a ferocious oppressor. They held it for an extended period of time and, several months after its seizure, John Knox joined them and became their minister, preaching his first public sermon here within the Castle walls. The murder of the Cardinal enraged Marie de Guise (mother of Mary Queen of Scots and an ardent Roman Catholic) who directed the Regent Arran to lay siege to the Castle. With the help of the French navy, the Protestants were forced to surrender. Among those taken prisoner was John Knox, who was chained in a French galley for 19 months.

A most remarkable feature of the Castle survives from the time of this siege and can still be seen today; we would encourage you to visit it. In

October 1546 Regent Arran's troops began digging in order to undermine one of the main towers of the Castle. The Protestants inside began a counter mine from the inside to stop them and the two mines met deep under the Castle. These remain a unique example of mediaeval siege warfare. The Castle was taken by the French in July 1547.

On one occasion, during his time of captivity on the French galley, John Knox saw, in the distance, the towers of St Andrews and gave expression to the hope and firm belief that he would one day preach again in the town, where the Lord had first opened his mouth in public. This showed remarkable confidence in the Lord to hear what must also have been his fervent prayer. It was answered over 10 years later, when he preached in St Andrews again, with such power and effect that the work of reformation was to be ushered in more fully.

Knox was the man whom the Lord had appointed to take up the mantle of Wishart, who had been removed by the fiery trial of martyrdom in the same town. Wishart, aware that he was going to be executed, had told Knox on their parting at Ormiston: "One is sufficient for a sacrifice". So it proved to be.

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## **"Where Are You Going?"**

**T**he young man lived in Amsterdam. He was the son of a very rich merchant. He had everything that money could buy. He was very friendly and was really popular among his young friends. But he was not happy. He was like the rich young man that Jesus spoke about who went away from Him very sorrowfully. They both lacked "one thing" – a new heart.

It was the middle of winter in Amsterdam and the young man attended lots of social events. He was at the centre of every one he attended. One evening, a grand dance was to be held in the city; the young man and some friends arranged to go there, and two of them were to pick him up at his parents' house. The young man was always punctual and he was ready in good time. He came downstairs to a room his mother used and waited there.

There was a loud knock on the door and his friends came inside. They congratulated him on his appearance, but he did not respond. He seemed like someone who had been stunned by an unexpected blow. The young man looked at his friends and said he was not feeling well – it was just an excuse – and told them to go to the dance without him. They tried hard to persuade him to come with them, but without success.

What had happened to the young man? His conscience had been touched.

As he stood in his mother’s room, he noticed a little book on a table in front of him. He picked it up and looked at it. Its title was, *Where Are You Going?* His mother had left it on the table in the hope that he would see it and look at it. Probably she prayed that God would bless it to him.

At first, the young man was annoyed at himself for feeling so disturbed. He longed for his friends to come, so that he would be distracted from his concern. But the title of the book soon took such a powerful grip of his mind that he was, again and again, asking himself, “Where are you going?” And soon he did not want to go to the dance.

When his friends had left, he went up to his room, shut the door and began to read the book quietly. That whole night he was very upset. A new day began to dawn, but he was no happier. He thought over his whole past life and the sins he had committed. Some of these sins seemed more serious than others. These more serious sins particularly seemed to cry out to him: Where are you going? No doubt the thrust of that question was: Are you going to heaven or to hell? And as he remembered his sins, it must have been clear to him that he was not on the way to heaven, that he was very definitely heading in the direction of a lost eternity.

When the young man did not come downstairs for breakfast, his mother went up to his bedroom door and asked him if he was sick. He did not ask her to come in; he did not want her to see him so upset. He thanked her and said that he wanted to be alone. She went back downstairs and prayed that God would bless her son.

He spent the whole day alone. From that day onwards, there was a distinct change in his life, though we do not know how he found Christ. Before then he had given himself wholeheartedly to the world and, not least, to its entertainments. Now his greatest wish was to give himself wholeheartedly to God. He now loved his Bible and wanted to study it more than any other book. And he did all he could to persuade his worldly friends to think seriously about heaven and, presumably, how to get there. He not only spoke to them but tried to show them a consistent example of godly living.

Some time afterwards, the young man left the Netherlands; he seems to have gone to the United States. When he got there, he made friends of people whom he believed to be sincerely religious. Some months later, he was on a sea voyage on the Pacific Ocean. One day, as night fell, he was thinking prayerfully and took seriously ill. Before long he died. His last words were, “Death has nothing terrible [in it]. It is but a passage. Jesus is there.” For the young man, death was only a passing from earth to heaven, and then all would be well for ever. Let us note some lessons:

1. The young man’s excuse was not the truth. But God gave him a new

heart, and then he would have wanted to tell the truth always. God will deliver His people from all sin before they reach heaven.

2. At first, the young man had no serious thoughts about his soul. But God made him think seriously. This was an answer to his mother's prayers. It should be an encouragement to God's children to pray to God for their unconverted friends and relations. There is no limit to His power.

3. The young man had every reason to be thankful that his mother left the book out for him to see, and even more for her prayers. He had still more reason to say, like Paul, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15) – that is, for Jesus Christ, whom God the Father gave "to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14).

4. The young man became truly earnest about his soul. Earnestness will not save us, but we should certainly be in earnest about our souls. How foolish to remain careless about our souls if our sins have not been forgiven and we are still on the way to a lost eternity.

5. Notice also that the young man died quite suddenly. He had very little time to prepare for eternity when he became seriously ill. But, in God's kindness, the young man was ready to die; God did not leave him to himself. Yet how easily he could have ignored the question on his mother's book, "Where are you going?" The question is highly relevant to every one of us. What way are you taking through this world? Are you going towards heaven or towards hell?

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## The Law of God

### 5. The Third Use of the Law

*Rev K M Watkins*

God's moral law, summarised in the Ten Commandments, shows us the fixed difference between right and wrong. The last two articles explained that this law is useful (1) for restraining evil and encouraging good in the world, and (2) to convict sinners of their sin. The third use of the law is as a *rule of life* for the Lord's people. (This is the last article in the series.)

Believers have learned that they cannot get right with God by the law. Only by trusting in Christ, who is revealed in the gospel, did they find forgiveness of sin and acceptance. But then they ask, as Saul of Tarsus did after he met Christ, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). In other words, How should I live the rest of my days in the world? This is where the third use of the law comes in. After forsaking the law as the way



to *get* right with God, they return to the law as the way to *live* right before God. This new law-keeping can never become the ground of their *justification*, but it does become the path of their *sanctification*. The Holy Spirit leads the children of God to the Ten Commandments continually, saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

Mount Sinai, with its terrible threatenings for disobedience to the law, drives sinners to Mount Calvary, with its wonderful provision of gospel grace and pardon through the shed blood of Christ. But then Mount Calvary, constraining their hearts with love, leads believers back to Mount Sinai – not in its covenant form, breathing out fire and judgement – but in its third use as the rule for their lives.

The preface to the Ten Commandments refers to the Lord bringing His people “out of the house of bondage”. Having escaped slavery in Egypt, the nation of Israel was free to serve the Lord according to His will. Likewise, born-again believers, having been freed from bondage to sin by the gospel, seek to use their new-found liberty to please the Lord. Their new endeavour to keep the law is a life of thankful love, not cold-hearted legalism. The Saviour said, “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me” (John 14:21). It proves that they are His sincere disciples: “Ye are My friends,” He says, “if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14).

But how can believers keep the very laws they spent their whole lives rejecting and rebelling against? The answer lies in their regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. The new birth gives them new hearts. Their stony hearts, hardened against the law of God in spiritual death, are replaced with hearts of flesh, tender hearts that are spiritually alive and compliant to the law. The Lord promises this in the covenant of grace: “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33).

After this, they “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Romans 7:22). They join the psalmist in singing, “O how love I Thy law! It is my study all the day” (Psalm 119:97, metrical version). They agree with the law, that it is right – that every commandment is “holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). They grieve that they thought anything in the law was wrong. Now they say, “Concerning all things Thy commands all right I judge therefore; And ev’ry false and wicked way I perfectly abhor” (Psalm 119:128, metrical version). With the guidance of the law, they increasingly “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14) – to make the difference between right and wrong. Yes, sin will be with them until their dying day. But grace will war against that remaining sin, until they reach heaven, the haven which they desire to see, where sin will be no more for ever.

So when the New Testament says that believers are no longer “under the law”, it only means that they are no longer under it *as a covenant*. As the condition of the covenant of works, the law demanded perfect obedience and cursed them for every failure. But they have been delivered from the curse of the law. Instead, they are under the gospel covenant, where Christ has fulfilled all the conditions on their behalf. Because of this, some think that Christians have nothing to do with the law at all, and that it is the gospel that becomes their rule of life. But that is a mistake. It confuses the gospel motivation at work in believers’ hearts with the pathway by which that motivation is worked out in daily life – the law *as a rule of life*. Believers are free of the law’s condemning power, but in their lives they are moved by sanctifying grace to follow its directions.

At the outset we thought of the lawless days of the judges when every man did what was right in his own eyes. The Holy Spirit traced that to this cause: “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Judges 21:25). When the Lord Jesus Christ is not our King, when He is not sitting upon the throne of our souls, our hearts and lives will be lawless, putting darkness for light, evil for good, wrong for right. But when we are regenerated, converted, and effectually called, Christ becomes our Prophet, our Priest, and also our King. He then rules over us according to the sweet reign of grace, conforming us more and more to the pattern of His law. And that will conform us more and more to His own likeness! For no one delighted in and performed the law of God more than He did (Psalm 40:7,8, metrical version):

Within the volume of the book  
it written is of Me:  
To do Thy will I take delight,  
O Thou My God that art;  
Yea, that most holy law of Thine  
I have within My heart.

To know what the law of God is really like, we can do nothing better than study the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He was perfectly and continuously conformed to all its requirements. His offering of Himself, in His whole obedience leading ultimately to the death of the cross, was without blemish and without spot for this very reason.

Redemption was accomplished, everlasting righteousness was brought in, an end was made of sin, the work of salvation was completed. And the law of God looked on and smiled with satisfaction. In Christ, the law’s precepts were fully obeyed and its curse fully borne. The prophecy was fulfilled: “The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will magnify the

law, and make it honourable” (Isaiah 42:21). Christ kept the difference between right and wrong most perfectly.

So make much of Christ in the gospel! That is the best way to make the right use of the law.

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## Felix Neff: Pastor of the High Alps

### 11. The Final Weeks of Weakness

In 1823 Neff became pastor of a large mountainous area in the High Alps district of France. He began his work energetically, seeking the good of souls. After some years, he became seriously ill. He returned to his home city of Geneva but was quite unable to preach the gospel. Yet he dictated letters to his people in the High Alps. We noted parts of one of them in last month’s article. This is the final article in the series.

**I**n his next letter to his people, written in March 1829, he told them: “Even more than ever I feel the importance, the absolute importance, of being a Christian indeed” – one who truly believes in Christ and lives as a Christian should, following the directions of the Bible.

“It is indeed true,” he went on, “that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven.” Much tribulation is what he was experiencing at that time, but he reminded his friends of what is written about Christ: “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Neff then commented, “How much more then have we need of this kind of instruction! Yes, I can now say, it has been good for me that I was afflicted. I needed this trial.”

Yet he found his situation very difficult: “I who formerly delighted in a life of activity am now reduced to a state of complete helplessness and can scarcely eat, drink, sleep, or even receive the visits of my brethren. And now I am making a great effort, in order to dictate these few lines.” It was often even more difficult for him – because of pain, sickness, temptation and the evils remaining in his own heart – to feel conscious of the presence of God and the comfort that comes from the gospel. Yet he would not exchange his present situation for a return of the time when he was well and was labouring in the gospel. Why? Because he was now so conscious of how often he was then unfaithful to God.

There was sin, no doubt, in everything he did, and he knew that the Lord saw all his sin. Yet it was also true that God saw a desire for His glory in what Neff did in preaching the gospel and in all his other efforts to do good to souls. That desire was the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in his soul, and

God was pleased with that work. Neff exclaimed, "My dear friends, how much time we lose, how many blessings we lose, in living so far from God . . . in eagerly pursuing the things that perish! I cannot repeat the direction too often: [to be] 'redeeming the time'." What he meant was that his people were, so to speak, to be buying back that the time that might be wasted on things that did no good to their souls; instead they were to use their time for activities that would be to God's glory. So should we.

Neff reminded his people that "salvation is absolutely of grace"; he stressed that he was not trusting in his own merits; he rejected his good works as a foundation for the salvation of his soul. His great desire was, like Paul, to be found in Christ, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9). Both Paul and Neff, like every other child of God, knew that they could not trust in a righteousness which comes from keeping the law themselves. So they desired a righteousness which is received by faith in Christ, who kept God's law on behalf of His people.

Neff said, "I do not wish to be saved but as the chief of sinners. And I acknowledge most readily before God that, from the first good desire that I ever felt, down to the last edifying word that I shall be able to utter, all has been, and must be, from God – only and entirely from God." It was, he added, "of His pure grace, and according to the good pleasure His will, [that He] was pleased to choose me before the foundation of the world; and . . . in spite of my poverty and worthlessness, has called me in time" through the gospel. Neff acknowledged too that it was God who had kept him, by His power, from falling away into sin.

He feared that this would be his last letter to his congregation. So, again like Paul, he commended them to God and to the word of His grace. Above everything else, Neff told them, they must read the Bible. "Be of good courage," he told them – for he was still addressing the *believers* in the High Alps – "very soon we shall meet again where we shall never part. Then we shall remain together for ever", in heaven. He closed his letter with these good wishes: "May the Lord bless you and keep you! May He give you that peace and joy which the world can never take away!"

Even during the last, difficult weeks, Neff was anxious that his friends gathered around him would know that he was still trusting in the good news about Christ. Although he could not raise his voice above a whisper, he said, "The gospel is true, is true, is true". And as death was drawing very near, Neff seemed to be praying all the time. He died on a Sabbath morning, 12 April 1829, after a great deal of suffering. He was only 30 or 31.

We should be thankful today that so many medicines are available to help

us when we are unwell. We should acknowledge God’s goodness in providing such medicines in His good providence. Who knows how much longer Neff would have lived if medical treatment had been more advanced in his time? But his work was finished. He had brought the good news of the gospel to many, and God blessed these truths about sin and salvation to many who heard them from him. God has fixed the time for which His servants will serve Him in this world. We should recognise that He is wise in all that He does.

May we seek earnestly to be prepared for death, however soon it may come to us – and we do not know how soon that may be. The Lord calls to us: “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6).

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*For Younger Readers*

## The Hungry Young Man

Someone gave a tract to a woman. She just twisted it with her hands and threw it away outside her house. There was a lamppost near her front door. A young man was leaning against the lamppost. He was longing for his friend to come along. He was losing patience.

He noticed, in the light from the lamp, a small white thing. It was the tract the woman threw away. He picked it up and started to read it. It was about the Prodigal Son; we read what Jesus says of him in the Bible in Luke 15.

The young man remembered happy days when he was a boy in his parents’ home. He compared these happy days with the unhappy, hungry days that were now his. He read about the Prodigal Son and how he went away from home, spent all his money and became very hungry.

But Jesus spoke about the father of the Prodigal Son meeting him as the son made his way home. He showed the son a love he did not deserve. And God showed the young man a love he did not deserve. The young man looked to Jesus Christ and was saved; all his sins were forgiven.

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*For Junior Readers*

## “God Save the King”

“Life how short. Eternity how long.” These are words on a gravestone at the Kirk of Shotts, halfway between Glasgow and Edinburgh. So very true, and how appropriate in view of the events of the past weeks! On Thursday, September 8, Queen Elizabeth II, who ruled for 70 years, died.

She passed away, at the age of 96, out of this world into the great eternity. Yes, she had reached an amazing age and, in the Lord's kindness had the health to continue her duties to the very end – but still, in the light of an endless eternity, any life here is short. How we all need to remember that!

Immediately after her death, her oldest son, Prince Charles, became king of Britain and some other countries. As Daniel acknowledged (chapter 2), “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His; and He changeth the times and the seasons; He removeth kings, and setteth up kings”. He is the God of providence, who said, “By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice”. He has also said that “the powers that be are ordained of God”.

So the Fifth Commandment, which requires “the preserving the honour and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals”, obviously teaches us that we are to give “honour to whom honour is due”. So we are to honour our new king.

What other duties are required of us? To pray for our king! This is clearly mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:1,2, where Paul says, “I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”.

When Saul was chosen to be king over the Children of Israel, “all the people shouted and said, God save the king”. We also should have that desire. We then wish that the Lord would preserve his life and save his soul, that the Lord would give him wisdom for all his duties and responsibilities, that he would reign in the fear of the Lord.

What did Solomon pray for when he became king? He asked, “O Lord God . . . give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people”. So our king also needs wisdom and knowledge in his new role.

Where is that wisdom to be found? Is it not in the Bible, the Word of God? When the young King Edward VI was to be crowned in 1547, three swords, were brought to him, symbolising his three kingdoms of England, Wales and Ireland. They were to be carried in the procession.

When the king saw them, he said that there was one sword missing. When asked what it was, he answered, “The Bible, which is the sword of the Spirit and is to be preferred before these swords. Without it we are nothing; we can do nothing; we have no power.” It would be wonderful if King Charles III had the same view of God's holy Word, for he will yet have to cast his crown before Christ, the “King of kings and Lord of lords” and bow before Him, as all his subjects also will!

*J van Kralingen*

## The Power and Triumph of Faith

This poem by John Newton is based on Daniel 3:6.

Supported by the Word,  
Though in himself a worm,  
The servant of the Lord  
Can wondrous acts perform.  
Without dismay he boldly treads  
Where'er the path of duty leads.

The haughty King in vain,  
With fury on his brow,  
Believers would constrain  
To golden gods to bow.  
The furnace could not make them fear,  
Because they knew the Lord was there.

As vain was the decree  
Which charged them not to pray.  
Daniel still did bow his knee  
And worshipped thrice a day.  
Trusting in God, he feared not men,  
Though threatened with the lion's den.

Secure they might refuse  
Compliance with such laws;  
For what had they to lose,  
When God espoused their cause?  
He made the hungry lions crouch,  
Nor did the fire His children touch.

The Lord is still the same,  
A mighty shield and tower.  
And they who trust His name  
Are guarded by His power.  
He can the rage of lions tame  
And bear them harmless through the flame.

Yet we too often shrink  
When trials are in view,  
Expecting we must sink  
And never can get through;  
But could we once believe indeed,  
From all these fears we shall be freed.

# Looking Around Us

## Waiting for God

“We are waiting for rain, for winter, for God.” So said Hervé Trentin in mid-August. He had been a firefighter for 34 years in the Gironde area, in south-west France. He stood at the edge of a charred section of forest, wiping tears off his cheeks. He was upset about the enormous destruction caused by a massive fire in his native district. He and his fellow firemen were trying to do what they could to prevent the fire from spreading further.

Jean-Pierre Le Cunff, a senior fireman, said, “I have been a firefighter for 40 years and I had never seen such a fire”. He used almost the same terms as his colleague, “We are waiting for rain, for snow, for winter, for God”.

Rain, snow and the colder weather of winter would, no doubt, put out the fire, if nothing else would do so. One cannot say what these men knew about God, but they said they were waiting for Him. They must have believed that, in some sense, He is powerful and that, if He would come, He could do something to stop the fire, or at least to hold it back.

But did they pray to Him? Did they recognise Him as a living Being to whom they could speak, One who could hear those who pray to Him? Or did they feel that they had to wait for Him without any real hope that He would ever come? After all, France is a very secular country – most people there feel no need for religion, no need for God. But God most certainly exists, and He takes pity on those who are in need.

David said, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He . . . heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1). David did not sit back idly as he was waiting for God; he was praying; in his need, he was looking by faith to the Lord for help. And God heard him; He delivered David from his troubles. We may pray to the Lord to deliver us from such disasters as fire. Even more, we should pray to Him to help us in our spiritual difficulties – to forgive our sins, to take away our unbelief, to make us pure and holy.

The day when Trentin and Le Cunff spoke about waiting, a storm was forecast for around midnight. The firemen were afraid that lightning would cause more fires. About 11 pm, lightning and thunder began – but so did rain. The rain would have reduced the intensity of the fire and, by the end of August, the megafires in that area had all stopped burning. God was good to those who were in need. Yet surely some people somewhere were praying for an end to the fires, people who truly believed in God. And He heard them. They could say, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and He . . . heard my cry”.

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