

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 88

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Number 12

“Cry Aloud”

Many years ago, workmen were making alterations in an English church. They found an old pulpit that had been hidden away somewhere for many years. Among the beautiful carvings on it were the words, “Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, cry aloud”. The words are from Isaiah 58:1, except that the clauses are not in the right order. The whole verse reads: “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”.

This is God speaking to the Prophet Isaiah. He was to tell the people of Israel about their sins. He was not to whisper it; he was to speak out clearly; he was to make sure that everyone could hear him, so that no one could miss God's message about sin. Similarly the words on the pulpit should have been a reminder to every preacher that stood in that pulpit to make sure that everyone in the congregation would hear God's message about sin.

Obviously, not everyone reading this article is a preacher. But *every* reader needs to know about sin; all need to know that they individually are sinners. Why do they need to know? Because sin is offensive to God. He hates sin. And it is dangerous to do what God hates. Sin has terrible consequences, and we need to know about them. We need to know that every sin deserves “God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come” (*Shorter Catechism*, Answer 84). Every sin is committed against God, who is absolutely holy and righteous. He is the God who created us human beings. He cannot pass by any sin; it must be punished – unless we can find a substitute, one who will suffer the punishment instead of us.

And there is such a substitute. God Himself has provided a substitute, His own Son. God the Son became man so that He could suffer as a substitute for sinners. He did suffer and die instead of them. His work of salvation was perfect. So everyone who believes in Jesus will be saved; none of them will perish; they will all have eternal life. No one who believes in Him will go to hell; they will all reach heaven at last.

We need to hear about sin; we need to hear preaching about sin; we need to hear what the Bible says about sin. We are not to listen to the Bible's

teaching on sin as if it only applied to other people; we need to listen to it as what is very much relevant to ourselves. The preacher should say, just as Nathan told David: "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7).

David had sinned badly, and God was speaking to David's conscience through the prophet Nathan, so that David would realise that he had committed serious sin and that he was truly guilty before God. He realised that and he turned to God in true repentance. We should realise that God's ambassadors – those whom God sends to preach to us – must tell us that we are sinners. We should then say to ourselves: Yes, I am a sinner; I have done much that is wrong; I deserve to be punished for ever; and nothing can be more serious than that.

Especially if you move away from home, you must make sure that the preacher you listen to emphasises the fact of sin; do not choose a minister who is happy to leave your conscience asleep under his preaching. Indeed the necessity to sit under a ministry that is faithful to Scripture – not least in connection with its teaching about sin – should be a major factor in choosing the place where you decide to live.

But the preacher must not leave off teaching Scripture truth when he has dealt with sin. Especially he must point sinners to the remedy, the remedy that *God* has provided. Christ's disciples went out everywhere teaching the gospel, the good news that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

We should want to hear the Scripture message of salvation again and again. Unconverted people need to hear it; they need to be reminded repeatedly that they need Christ and salvation through Him. But those who have been converted also need to hear it. They are still sinners; so they need to be pointed to Christ again and again so that they may understand more about their need to trust in Him for the forgiveness of all their sins. And they need to trust in Him to send the Holy Spirit to subdue sin further in their souls and to make them more and more holy.

But why was the pulpit hidden away? The truth is that I do not know. But maybe it was because the congregation did not like to be reminded about their sin, or that the minister did not want to be reminded that he should emphasise in his preaching what the Bible says about sin.

There may have been other and better reasons for replacing the pulpit. But today – and since a very long time – one of the serious problems in many churches is that people do not want to hear about sin. They might describe it as such discouraging and depressing teaching. But it is the truth, and we need to face up to the truth.

We cannot afford to ignore what God tells us for our good. If people were

warning us about serious dangers on the road ahead, we would be reckless to ignore what they were saying – unless it was obvious that they were telling lies. But when God warns sinners about sin, we can be sure that He is telling us the truth.

So we need to pay attention to the dangers of sin and we need to do so urgently. Especially as the year is drawing to a close, reminding us that eternity is getting nearer, we should be considering God's call very seriously and urgently: "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" (Isaiah 55:6,7).

Katherine von Bora

5. Katherine and Luther's Table Talk

F R Daubney

Last month's article told about the home life of Martin and Katherine Luther and their children.

The book, *Luther's Table Talk*, is made up of the Reformer's conversation at mealtimes and around his fireside. His students published their notes after his death, and there are 6596 entries. The subject matter ranges from the majesty of God to politics, popes, pigs – all manner of random topics, from the deeply religious to the jocular.

Some examples are:

- "Birds lack faith. They fly away when I enter the orchard, though I mean them no ill. Even so do we lack faith in God."
- Sometimes Luther would express himself in an angry and violent way. Asked why his language was so violent, he replied, "A twig can be cut off with a bread knife, but an oak calls for an axe".
- "What lies there are about relics! One claims to have a feather from the wing of the angel Gabriel. The Bishop of Mainz has a flame from Moses' burning bush. And how does it happen that 18 apostles are buried in Germany when Christ had only 12?"
- Musing about eternity, Luther commented that it was a very long time and wondered what souls would do in heaven. "No change, no work, no eating, no drinking, nothing to do. I suppose there will be plenty to see." "Yes," said Melanchthon, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us". "Why, of course", answered Luther, "That sight will give us quite enough to do."

Unusually, Katherine was often present at Luther's "table talks". Women were normally excluded from such discussions, and people of the time remarked on her presence disapprovingly. One historian, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on von Bora, says that when written copies of the debates were edited and published some tens of years later, many of Katherine's contributions were removed, or attributed to men.

Luther's underlying view of marriage was that the man is the head of the wife because he was created first. He is to rule over her with gentleness. She is to give him not only love but also honour and obedience. She has her sphere, and she can do more with her little finger with the children than he can with both hands. But she is to confine herself to that sphere.

Children are to be subject to parents, especially to the father, who exercises in the household the same sort of authority as the magistrate does in the state. Disrespect for parents is a breach of the Fifth Commandment. On one occasion Luther refused to forgive his son for three days, although the boy begged his pardon and Katherine and others interceded. He was making the point that, when the boy was disobeying his father, he was offending the majesty of God.

Luther's ideal for a wife was Rebecca, who accepted the husband selected for her by her family. In Luther's eyes, Jacob deserved to be condemned because, after receiving Leah, who bore him children, he worked another seven years out of infatuation for the pretty face of Rachel. Yet Luther was glad of this failing because it proved Jacob was saved by faith and not by works.

After his own marriage, Luther's emphasis shifted. He saw what a great help Katherine was to him, and how much he relied on her. He once chided himself for giving "more credit to Katherine than to Christ, who has done so much for me". And he declared, "I would not give my Katie for France and Venice together". On another occasion he said that he would not exchange her for the riches of Croesus (a king from the time of King Cyrus (see Ezra 1:1); he was famous for his wealth). As Luther came to value Katherine more and more, her desire to share and reinforce his religious commitment also grew, and the couple who came together in such an unusual way came genuinely to love one other.

In 1542 Luther wrote his will, a copy of which survives to this day. In it he expresses his love and gratitude to his wife: "I, Dr Martin Luther, do herewith set forth, in my own handwriting, that on this present day, and in virtue of this document, I bequeath to my beloved and faithful wife Katherine, during her lifetime, and to use according to her own pleasure, the following . . .". He left absolutely everything that he had in terms of property and

possessions to Katherine. He said that she should not receive from the children but they from her, that they should honour her and be subject to her, and that she should use her property to their profit and advantage, they being her own flesh and blood.

The will was not shown to Katherine at the time in case she was upset by the thought of separation. For a man to leave all to his wife and not to his sons was unheard of at the time, and judges actually ruled the will to be illegal after Luther's death in 1546.

Toward the end of 1545 Luther was asked to go to Eisleben, his birthplace, to settle a dispute between the Counts of Mansfeld. He was not successful and was invited to make another attempt in January 1546. Before leaving home – this time accompanied by his three sons and his friend Justus Jonas – he said that he could lie down and die with joy if only he could see his dear Lords of Mansfeld reconciled. Before he left, Katherine packed medicines for him because he had not been feeling well.

On January 15, he wrote to Katherine: "To my kind and dear Katie Luther at Wittenberg, grace and peace in the Lord". He said they had arrived and that the river Saale was bursting over with great floods of water and huge blocks of ice. A few days later he wrote, "Dear, pray read the Gospel of John and the little catechism. . . . Do not be anxious, God is able to raise up new Martin Luthers by the dozen if the old one were to drown in the Saale." On February 14, he wrote to "my dear, sweet wife, Katherine Luther at Wittenberg, grace and peace in the Lord. The Counts of Mansfeld have become brothers again and they are now speaking to each other, instead of embittering each other with letters." He then wrote of his plans for coming home, but it was not to be.

Lessons from the Life of Aaron

4. Aaron, His Sons and Other Rebels

Rev John Campbell

Last month's part of this Youth Conference paper was about Aaron acting as the high priest in Israel.

The story of Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, is full of warning for us. They were disobedient in what they did with the holy things of God. In common with Aaron and his other two sons, they were set apart to serve God as priests. Yet their lives ended when God destroyed them for profaning His worship. What a solemn warning they are for all, especially for those who ignore the importance of God's will in His worship.

It is always a great danger to oneself, and to others, when anyone refuses to obey what God has commanded and, as it were, sets out to make a blaze of strange fire. Their end may not be sudden, as it was with Nadab and Abihu, but it is always certain unless they repent. Those who take to do with the things of God should fear nothing more than themselves becoming a “castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27), after experiencing His goodness and favour.

I wish to draw attention to Aaron's response to this incident. We read that “Aaron held his peace” (Leviticus 10:3). He kept silent. No doubt, the sudden loss of his two eldest sons was a calamity, and overwhelming to his feelings as a father. But, godly man that he was, he did not indulge in any outburst of complaint against the severity of God. To do so would have added his sin to their sin. Nor did he give any place to murmuring; he was silent in holy submission to God, His judgement and His will.

Crushingly sad as his sons' death must have been to him, his silent submission to God's will was, no doubt, due to seeing what happened as the righteous judgement of God. Aaron would have seen and understood something of the perfect holiness of God. What a gracious acceptance he was given! We may all learn from it.

Job was given grace to say at the sudden loss of his family: “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:21,22). As with Job, so also with Aaron.

Are you and I able to acknowledge the Lord in His dealings with ourselves and with others we love? Although there may perhaps be much personal sorrow, He blesses it to us for our spiritual good, when we thus submit to God and accept His discipline, and it is for His glory and honour. Many are in a happy eternity today, because the Holy Spirit of God used a sudden, sad or hard providence to bring a blessing to their never-dying souls.

When we look at what happened to Nadab and Abihu, we are to behold both “the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22). Let us habitually pause and consider, in solemn reverence, the awesome holiness of the God with whom we all have to do.

God's appointment of Aaron and Moses to their positions among the Children of Israel was confirmed by the destruction of the rebels led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16). The right of Aaron and his successors to be high priest was further confirmed by the budding of the rod taken for the tribe of Levi and inscribed with Aaron's name (Numbers 17).

Korah's rebellion was directed as much against the exclusive priesthood of Aaron and his sons as it was against the civil authority of Moses. On the surface the rebellion perhaps appeared to be against the human leaders of

the congregation of Israel, but in fact it was God's authority – seen in His appointment of Moses, and Aaron and his sons – that was being challenged. This is what made the rebellion so solemn and so serious, and what, no doubt, made the stroke of God's judgement so severe against these rebels. As Moses said to Korah, "Both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord; and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" (Numbers 16:11).

Aaron and his successors' right to the holy office of the high priesthood was further confirmed by the budding of Aaron's rod. God spoke loudly and clearly, and so the people ought not to have murmured any more against Aaron or his successors.

In Numbers 16:48, we read that Aaron "stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed". This was when Aaron stopped the plague which the Lord had sent upon the people for their daring and ungodly murmuring after God had destroyed the rebels. Perhaps nothing else about Aaron in the Bible shows us so clearly his solemn position as High Priest. He was involved in issues of life and death as he stood between a Holy God and a sinful people.

By standing between an offended God and an offending people, Aaron was the human means of bringing to an end the devastating plague which followed their sin. His service is therefore one of a mediator, an intercessor – which again shows us, by vivid type, the perfect service of Christ, the Divine Mediator to come, who stood between God and men.

We see from this incident that no one should lightly regard any service they give which has an influence on the eternal destiny of others. Its consequences are of such great importance as to forbid any trivialising of its solemn duties. Souls are very precious, and God's faithfulness and righteousness must always be honoured by His servants and people.

If we truly realised such eternal realities, and laid them to heart, what an influence it would have on our attitude to people's lives. The Lord's people are, by grace, His priests in a sinful and dying world. Instead of regarding life as an opportunity to please ourselves, we should seek grace to take the utmost care to make all our temporal personal interests (education, career, and even family) secondary to the interests of God and His cause, and the good of our own soul and the souls of others.

Another lesson it teaches us is that spiritual life and fruitfulness are distinguishing marks of being set apart by God and for God. God responds to the faith of His people by maintaining the fruitfulness and vigour of spiritual life in their souls. So they are transformed from a state of dryness and lifelessness into a fruit-bearing branch of the invisible True Vine.

The budding of Aaron's rod was mysterious and miraculous, but it was real and it could be seen. But His people's vital union with Christ, the source of their inward spiritual life and fruitfulness, cannot be seen or understood by others. Yet the union of Christ with His people should not be denied – for there are outward evidences of it. The visible budding of Aaron's rod, which then brought forth blossoms, gives us a picture of the beautiful fragrance and fruitfulness of a life devoted to God, which is seen by others and appreciated.

The supernatural character of Aaron's rod was to be seen, over and above any outward beauty and wonder it may have had. So Christ says to all His people, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit". Only then "shall all men know that ye are My disciples".

First Forgiveness, then Holiness

Horatius Bonar

This article has been edited. Horatius Bonar was a minister who died in 1889.

Once spoke with a young man about Christ as a substitute for sinners – as One who suffered and died in their place. He sat, with his Bible in front of him, pondering the way of life. He asked, "What must I do to be saved?" He was in darkness and saw no light. He was a sinner; how was he to be saved? He was guilty; how was he to be forgiven?

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done", I told him.

"No, certainly; but how then?"

"By Christ doing the whole."

"But is this possible? Can I be saved by another doing the whole for me?"

"It is not only possible, but it is certain. This is the way, the only way. It is God's one way of saving the sinner."

"And have I nothing to do?"

"Nothing in order to be saved."

"But tell me how this is to be."

"Let us come back to the truth about the Substitute. You know what that is?"

"I do. But how does this bear upon my case?"

"Christ offers Himself to you as your Substitute to do what you should have done, to suffer what you should have suffered, to pay what you should have paid."

"Do you mean that Christ has actually paid my debt, and that this is what I am to believe in order to be saved?"

“No. Your debt is not paid till you believe; then it is paid – paid once for all, once and for ever, but not till then.”

“How then is the work of Christ, as the Substitute, good news to me?”

“If there is enough money lodged in your bank account to pay all your debts twice over, you have only to apply for it. Hand in your cheque, and you will get the money at once.”

“I see; I see. It is believing that brings me into actual possession of all the fruits of the sin-bearing work upon the cross.”

“Yes, just so. Or let me put it in another way. Christ died for the sins of many. He is the Substitute. He is presented to you as the Substitute. Are you willing to take Him as such, that He may pay all your debts and forgive all your sin?”

“Yes. But let me see this more fully, for it seems too simple.”

“Well, put it like this: God has provided a Substitute for the guilty, who 1800 years ago, suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust. The Father presents that complete Substitute to you, and asks your consent to the exchange. The Son presents Himself to you, offering to be your Substitute. The Holy Spirit presents Him to you as a Substitute. Do you consent? The Father is willing; the Son is willing; the Spirit is willing. Are you willing? Do you give your consent?”

“Is that it?” said he.

“It is. Your being willing to take Christ as your Substitute shows that you have believed.”

“Is that it?” he said again. And the light broke in on him. “Christ our Substitute was the dawning of the day.”

Thus the sinner’s chain is broken and he is set free to serve God. First liberty, then service – the service of men set free from condemnation and from bondage. This is the true beginning of a holy life.

If I am to live a holy life, I must begin with the Substitute. I must deal with Him for pardon and deliverance. Thus being by Him “delivered out of the hand of our enemies,” we serve God “without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.”

If I am to serve God and if I am to possess anything of “true religion”, I must begin with the Substitute. Religion begins with pardon; without pardon religion is a poor, difficult business.

“There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.” (The fear of God is that holy respect for God and His commandments that involves a holy submission to Him and them.) This is what God reveals: not first the fear of God and then forgiveness, but first forgiveness and then the fear of God.

Seek the Lord (2)

John Kennedy

This is another part of a sermon preached to young people in Dingwall in 1859; it has been edited. The minister's text was: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). In last month's part, he was speaking about reasons for seeking Christ. The first reason was: "Because you do not have Him.". The second was: "Because you need Him". So Kennedy warned about drowning in a sea of sin – like a child swimming in a river who was seized with cramp or a sailor bathing in the sea who was grabbed by a crocodile and dragged deep down beneath the water, or a young man swimming across a river just above a big waterfall who was caught by the current and carried over the waterfall.

It is in this kind of position you are while *careless* – at your ease in a state of sin. And like the sudden cramp, or the dreadful shark, death will come in a moment suddenly and carry you down to the depths of hell. Why do you think Lazarus' sisters were seeking Jesus when their brother was dead? It was because no one else could bring him to life again. Now your soul ought to be dearer to you than Lazarus was to his sisters. It is dead, and no one can bring it to life except Christ. Only He could say, "I am the resurrection and the life".

Why, do you think, were the blind men seeking Jesus, who were crying out to Him when Jesus was passing nearby: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us"? It was because they needed to get their sight, and no one but Jesus could give it to them. Now you are blind as to your soul, and you should seek Jesus to open your eyes.

Why, do you think, did the leper seek Jesus who fell at His feet crying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean"? It was because he needed healing, and no one but the Lord could heal him; and while he was a leper he was shut out from the company of those who were free from leprosy. Now your soul is covered with the leprosy of sin. It shuts you out from God and from His people, and no one can cure it except Christ.

You should seek Christ then because you are lost, and no one but He can save you. You are dead, and no one but He can make you alive. You are diseased, and no one but He can heal you. You are blind, and no one but He can open your eyes.

(3) You should seek Christ because *He is worth seeking*. He is the pearl of great price. If you seek anything else rather than Christ, it is just like someone seeking and finding useless bits of straw instead of the richest pearl in the world.

For example, Charlotte Elizabeth taught a boy, who could not hear or speak, about the value of Christ's blood. The child found it difficult to understand

how the one sacrifice of Christ should be more valuable than all the thousands of sacrifices that were offered under the law, and more valuable than all the works that people could do to reconcile themselves to God.

The way the kind lady took to teach him was this. She placed one gold coin on the table, and opposite it a heap of dirty rags and bits of paper and other useless things, and then by signs asked the dumb child to choose between them. At once he seized the gold piece and, with a wave of his hand, tossed the heap of rubbish off the table.

Why did the dumb boy seek the gold rather than the great heap that was opposite it? Just because it was worth seeking and the rubbish was not. This is the reason why you should seek Christ. He is “the pearl of great price”.

Christ has three things which are infinitely better than everything else: (1) beauty, (2) love, (3) riches.

1. Who can speak of Christ’s *beauty*? If you saw Him, you would join with the Church in saying, He is “the chiefest among ten thousand”; He is “altogether lovely”. He has all the infinite beauty of God, all the perfect beauty of man, and all the wonderful beauty of the God-man. He was His Father’s delight from all eternity. He tells us this Himself: “I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him” (Proverbs 8:30).

The angels adore His beauty: “Let all the angels of God worship Him”. All the saints in heaven are beholding and admiring and praising His beauty. This is their happiness. They will never become weary of beholding Christ’s beauty.

All whose eyes were opened on earth never saw anything they would compare to Christ’s beauty. David sang of Him: “Thou art fairer than the children of men” (Psalm 45:2). Solomon said of Him that He was “the chiefest among ten thousand” and “altogether lovely”. Paul counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him. The disciples, when they saw Him, left all and followed Him.

If only you would see Him you would think nothing of all you ever saw before. Put all the beauty of the world into one object; let all the glory of the sun, all the beauty of the moon, all the lustre of the stars, all the fair colours that adorn the earth, all the loveliness that was ever seen in any object in all the universe – and the beauty formed by a perfect combination of the whole world – be compared to Christ. They are but as the vilest thing in the world compared to the most beautiful.

Children, you love to see strange sights and beautiful things, and you have often said of one thing and of another: “How beautiful! How wonderful!” But did any of you ever say this of Christ? Will none of you ask to see Christ? O that He would show you His beauty! Then you would seek Him indeed.

*For Younger Readers***Robert Bruce**

Long ago there was a minister in Edinburgh called Robert Bruce. Those who loved God liked his preaching. And God used his preaching to bring many to trust in Jesus.

Those who ruled over Scotland at that time did not like Bruce's preaching. So they stopped him preaching in Edinburgh and twice they sent him away to Inverness. Inverness was then just a small village, and it was a long, long journey for Bruce to get there. There were no cars and buses or trains then; he had to ride on a horse.

But Bruce preached in Inverness. The second time he was there, God used his preaching to bring many people to believe in Jesus and to live godly lives. A lot of people came to hear Bruce on Sabbaths from a long distance away.

Several years after coming home from Inverness, Bruce came downstairs one morning for breakfast. His younger daughter, Martha, ate breakfast with him. Bruce had an egg and enjoyed it. He still felt hungry, so he asked Martha for another egg.

Then he told her to stop. He said to her that his Master was calling him. He meant that God was calling him to heaven. He knew that he was going to die and go to heaven.

He asked for a Bible, the large Bible they had in the house. Martha brought it to him. But Bruce could not read it any more. He had suddenly gone blind.

So he asked Martha to look up Romans, chapter 8, in the Bible. He then spoke out, from memory, much of the second part of the chapter, until he came to these words, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God".

"Set my finger on these words", he said to Martha. Then he said, "God be with you, my children". He reminded her that he had his breakfast with them that morning. But he told her that by the time they would have their supper, that evening, he would be with the Lord Jesus. He then said what were perhaps his last words: "I die believing in these words". He meant the words from the Bible that promised that nothing could separate him from God's love.

How good it was for Robert Bruce that he knew about the love of God and that he really valued it! May we too seek to know something for ourselves about God's love!

For Junior Readers

Trusting in Ourselves?

I hope you are all familiar with the parable Jesus told about the Pharisee and the publican. But did you ever notice who the Saviour was directing this parable to? It was to those who, “trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others” – in other words, to those who were “self-righteous” and thought they were better than everyone else.

You know that, in Jesus' time, the Pharisees were Jews who kept all their religious laws and traditions very carefully. The Apostle Paul described himself as, before his conversion, “an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee”.

The publicans were men who collected taxes from the Jews to pay to the Romans. They were often suspected of collecting more money than they ought to have done, and of keeping too much for themselves. For these reasons they were disliked, indeed despised, by the other Jews. Remember Zaccheus was a publican in Jericho; in fact, he was the chief tax collector there, and he was a rich man.

Both the men in the parable went to the temple to pray and the Saviour tells us what they said. The Pharisee's prayer was more like a list of what he thought were his good deeds. And he added a comment about how much better he was than the publican.

On the other hand, the publican had nothing good to say about himself. He felt himself to be so sinful that he could not even look up. But he “smote upon his breast”, praying, “God be merciful to me a sinner”. He was coming as a beggar to God. He had nothing to recommend himself to God; he was relying only on God's mercy.

Which of these men got a blessing? Not the proud, self-righteous Pharisee, but the poor publican!

Which of these two men do you think you are like? Perhaps you are more like the Pharisee than you realise. You may have godly parents who teach you out of the Bible; you attend church every week; you learn your Bible verses and you are very pleased with yourselves. You look at other children who do not have these privileges and you think how bad they are. That is what is called being self-righteous, just like the Pharisee was.

But you need to realise, like the publican did, how bad you actually are. God's Word, the Bible, tells us clearly: "There is none righteous, *no, not one*" – not me, not you, not anyone! We all have hearts that are "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked". We all need to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner", and, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me".

Then you might come to understand what the Apostle Paul meant when he prayed "that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, 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 3:8,9).

J van Kralingen

A Strange Verse?

The man seemed to think that Christianity was just a collection of puzzling problems. He was speaking to an old minister and thought he would bring up one of his problems.

"That is a very strange verse in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans", he said to the minister and quoted these words from verse 13: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated".

"Very strange", the minister answered. But he went on to ask, "What is it that you think most strange about it?"

The man was rather surprised at the question, and the way he answered seem to show that he thought the minister rather stupid. He said, "'Esau have I hated' is certainly very strange".

The minister commented on the differences between various people and the ways they think. He then told the other man: "The strangest part of all to me is that He could ever have loved Jacob".

The minister understood something about God and His hatred of sin. Esau was a sinner and so God must punish sin. The minister did not find it strange that God would punish sin. He did find it strange that God would love a sinner.

Let us ask ourselves: Why should God love me? Is there anything in me that God would find loveable? Unless God has been at work in my soul and has begun the work of making me holy, all He can see is horrible. God sees a sinful nature and sinful actions, sinful words and sinful thoughts as totally hateful. There is nothing about us that He can love if we are unconverted.

There was nothing in Jacob that could attract God. Yet God loved him, for His own glory. God made Jacob holy. He can make you holy too. Pray that He would do so.

The Young People's Magazine

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Editor: Rev Kenneth D Macleod

*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)*

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

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Overseas Prizes and Awards

Senior Section

Prizes: *Carterton:* Aaron Verheij. *Chesley:* Kara Zekveld. *Connecticut:* Nathanael Mack. *Grafton:* William Marshall.

Awards: *Auckland:* John Campbell, Amelia Smith. *Calgary:* Kharis Chang. *Fountain Inn:* Ehud Kerr.

Intermediate Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Aaron Smith. *Gisborne:* Shona Hembd. *Grafton:* Levi Kidd. *Münster:* Clara Rösner.

Awards: *Auckland:* Peter Campbell. *Calgary:* Khloe Chang. *Carterton:* Blake Verheij. *Gisborne:* Timothy Newton.

Junior Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Joseph Campbell. *Fountain Inn:* Isabel Kerr. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn Hembd. *Sydney:* Ethan Macdonald.

Awards: *Auckland:* Owen Smith. *Calgary:* Karsten Chang. *Carterton:* Chelsea Verheij. *Chesley:* Angela Tuinier. *Gisborne:* James Newton.

Upper Primary Section

Prizes: *Auckland:* Keith Smith. *Edmonton:* John Mun. *Gisborne:* Preston Hembd. *Grafton:* Harrison Kidd. *Sydney:* Abigail Macdonald.

Awards: *Carterton:* Ruby Verheij. *Fountain Inn:* Zerubbabel Kerr. *Sydney:* David and Sarah Steel.

Lower Primary Section

Awards: *Auckland:* David and Marion Campbell, Daniel Smith. *Calafell:* Valentina Nayach van Essen. *Carterton:* Lana and Mila de Boer. *Chesley:* James and Matthew Kuiper, Meleah Tuinier. *Edmonton:* Anna and Isaiah Mun. *Fountain Inn:* Katherine Kerr. *Gisborne:* Andrew and Ashley Hembd. *Münster:* Conrad Rösner. *Santa Fe:* Scout Smith. *Sydney:* Jackson Campbell, Oliver Campbell, Hugh, James and Lachlan Macdonald, Emily Steel.

Looking Around Us

Sabbath Employment

Some of you are no doubt thinking seriously about what you will do when you leave school or when your university or college course is over. What kind of job will you do? What kind of conditions will you work under?

Most employers today pay very little attention to religion. In particular, they pay very little attention to the Sabbath. But the Lord's day is very important. He has said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy". Yes, businesses may treat the whole idea of the Sabbath as irrelevant, but those who run them will have to give account to God at last, for rejecting the Sabbath. God's authority extends everywhere, and He will not excuse those who rejected the opportunity to enjoy the blessings of the Sabbath.

All of us have a responsibility to avoid breaking the Sabbath at home or at work or anywhere else. So those who are seeking work must consider if there are implications for Sabbath work – even just occasionally – in the new

position they have in mind. Of course, there are some occupations where Sabbath working is necessary. For instance, a doctor cannot abandon his patients on a Sabbath if they really need his care on that day.

On the other hand, there should be no argument for a postal worker sorting or delivering mail on a Sabbath. A postman in the United States has been involved in a court case with his employer, the United States Postal Service, over the pressure he was under to work on Sabbaths. In 2019 Gerald Groff resigned from the Service after seven years of growing pressure to work on the Lord's Day.

In the hope of escaping from that pressure, Groff had earlier transferred to a much smaller postal district in a country area, but again his employer put him under increasing pressure to break the Sabbath. In each place, he was asking the Postal Service to excuse him from Sabbath duties because of his sincerely held religious beliefs. The Postal Service argued that to do so would have more than a small effect on other employees, and so they did not need to excuse him.

US law since 1964 has required employers to make "reasonable" changes because of "the religious needs of employees", if to do so would not "create undue hardships" on "the employer's business". Court cases after 1964 had the result of protecting the employer from having to make changes unless the cost was very small indeed. Groff's case has brought about a welcome change after going all the way to the Supreme Court. This court decided, in June of this year, that the employer must make changes unless they involve a significant increase in costs or in its effects on other employees.

This court decision has, of course, no effect anywhere outside the United States and, while it should be helpful for employees in that country, it will not solve all difficulties in connection with Sabbath work. All moral issues at work require us to understand what God demands of us in His law and to address them prayerfully. And we must depend on the all-powerful God to direct us how to respond properly to each situation.

One final thought on Sabbath observance: God has commanded mankind, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy", and very, very few people do so. On the other hand, God has *not* commanded that the birth of Jesus Christ should be observed, and almost everyone does so – even if not as a religious festival. Going on scriptural principles, the Sabbath ought to be observed, for God has commanded it to be kept holy; Christmas should not be observed, because God has not commanded us to observe it; besides, Christmas is a continuation of a heathen festival.