

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



May 2024

Vol 89 • No 5

Contents

A True Report	83
Thomas and His Kind Foreman	86
John Bunyan:	
3. Delivered from Temptations	89
About Idolaters:	
3. Worshipping the Idol of Position	91
For Younger Readers:	
The Boy and His Bible	93
For Junior Readers:	
Naaman the Leper (1)	94
Looking Around Us	95
Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2023-24:	
Exercise 3	96

Cover picture: Kraals, with donkeys grazing, at Ingwenya, Zimbabwe.

The Young People's Magazine

Published by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Scottish charity number SC003545.

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

Material for the magazine should reach the editor by the beginning of the previous month.

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; tel: 0141 332 9283; e-mail: william.campbell@fpcoffice.org. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates for 2024, including postage, are: *Free Presbyterian Magazine* £35.60 (£2.75 per copy); *Young People's Magazine* £20.60 (£1.40 per copy); both magazines £54.00. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

Free Presbyterian Magazine: The Church's main magazine is *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*. Send to the General Treasurer at the above address for a free sample copy. See above for subscription rates.

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 89

May 2024

Number 5

A True Report

One of the longest journeys we read about in the Bible is the one the Queen of Sheba took to meet Solomon, the King of Israel, in faraway Jerusalem. The shortest route from the south of Arabia to Jerusalem is 1800 miles, or 3000 km; to drive today would take more than 37 hours. Obviously for the Queen of Sheba, riding on a camel, it would have taken much longer.

But, long as the journey was, she came to Jerusalem. Nothing could keep her back; it was so important for her to see King Solomon. She had heard such wonderful things about him – his wisdom, what he said and what he did – and especially about “the name of the Lord” (1 Kings 10:1). In other words, she especially wanted to know what God had revealed about Himself, for God had revealed Himself in Israel, but not in Sheba. So the Queen of Sheba was willing to make such a long, difficult journey from her own country to listen to what Solomon could tell her, in the hope that she would know something dependable about the true God.

When, almost 1000 years later, the Son of God came into this world, He spoke one day about the Queen of Sheba. He said, “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon”. And Christ emphasised, “Behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42). Solomon was basically an ordinary man, although he was a king and had extraordinary, God-given wisdom. But Jesus Christ, though He was a real man, was also God the Son. He was indeed a greater Person than Solomon.

The point He was making is: The Queen of Sheba made a huge effort to come to Solomon and to learn from what he had to say; how much more ready should we be to come to Christ to learn from Him about what we need for the good of our souls. We really do need Jesus Christ to teach us. Let us then make every effort to find Him.

We do not need to go to Jerusalem; we do not need to make any long journey; we may go to our Bible, asking that Jesus would teach us all we need to know about the way of salvation and whatever we must learn so that

we may get safely to heaven at last. And we should ask for the same blessing whenever we go to church and can expect the truths of the Bible to be faithfully preached.

After the Queen of Sheba had met Solomon and heard what he had to say, she told him: that it was all true that she had been told about him in her own country. She said, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom" (1 Kings 10:6). She had not been deceived in her own country when she had heard about Solomon. Everything that she had heard was true. It was all true about Solomon's wisdom; he really could answer all her questions, especially about "the name of the Lord".

So it is when we hear from the Bible about Jesus. It is a true report that comes to us. What we hear in the Bible comes from God Himself. It is all true; it is perfectly reliable; we can trust it from the beginning to the end. And those who come to Christ – those who believe in Him, who trust in Him by faith – this is what they find: "It was a true report that I heard". They know that they were not deceived. Time and again, they are convinced that what they heard was all perfectly reliable.

They did right in relying on the report; they were in no way deceived. What they heard when they were pointed to Jesus Christ as the way of salvation, they were still convinced years later that it was all true. Even after 50 years or more, there remain perfectly sure that it was a true report they heard. What Christ taught them at the beginning was true then, and it is still true. They can still rely on it and they will always be able to do so.

Solomon's wisdom was wonderfully great; no human being has ever shown greater wisdom. But how great is Christ's wisdom! There was a limit to Solomon's wisdom, great though it was, but there is no limit to Christ's wisdom. No matter how serious the difficulties we may take to Him, He is able to help us in them all.

We are all sinners; we need to be forgiven; we need to be made holy. How is that possible? Jesus can teach us how to escape from the power of our sins and from the punishment that is due to us because of our sins. And Jesus calls, in His wisdom, to every sinner who hears the gospel: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). We hear in the preaching of the gospel that, no matter how troubled we may be about sin or anything else, Christ can give us rest from all our troubles if we come to Him – if we trust in Him as the Saviour from sin that God has appointed for needy people like us. That is the report that comes to us, and it is true. And all who believe in Christ will discover that it is absolutely true.

At last death comes to everyone, but what has the believer to say about

the report when, solemnly, they are passing into eternity? Can they still rely on the promise, “I will give you rest”? Yes, absolutely. Every believer, no matter how great their sin has been, will say with absolute definiteness: “It was a true report that I heard”. They believed in Christ; they were promised rest; and now they are entering into eternal rest, so that all will be well for them for ever and ever in heaven. The report that came to them was indeed true, and it has now been fulfilled.

God makes many, many promises to believers, and He will keep them all; He is faithful to all His promises. For instance, the Lord says to each of them: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

If you follow through the life of the Apostle Paul, you will see him in various difficult situations. You will find him stoned at Lystra and so badly injured that he seemed to be dead (Acts 14:19), but did God forsake him?

No, Paul soon got up and went on with his work, encouraging the disciples. God did not forsake him, but gave him strength to go on with his work. He could look back to the promises that Christ may have made to him on the way to Damascus, when Paul first believed in the Saviour. Paul could then say, It was all perfectly true.

Death did come to Paul in the end, as it comes to everyone. Yet God did not forsake him even then. In the last letter he wrote, to Timothy, from a prison in Rome, he spoke about his confidence in Christ: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12), the Day of judgement. Paul could not keep himself from falling into sin, but by grace he had committed his soul to Christ to keep and he was sure that all would be well. He knew that God is always faithful to His promises.

It would not be long before an executioner would come to take away Paul’s life. Yet, knowing that the report that had come to him about God’s faithfulness was all true, he could say, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8) – Christ’s second coming, at the end of the world. He was confident that all would be well at death and on the Day of judgement, and for ever.

It is a true report that comes to you about salvation from sin, through Christ. Have you trusted in Him? To do so is the only safe way through life and the only safe way into heaven.

Christ still calls to you: “Come unto to Me”. He still commands you to trust in Him as the only Saviour from sin. But He will not call for ever. Not only are His invitations sincere; his warnings are true also true.

Thomas and His Kind Foreman

Thomas Drew worked in an iron foundry and a very good workman he was, when he was sober. The owner of the foundry one day expressed the wish to his foreman that “the temperance people” would get Thomas “to take the pledge” – to sign a promise to stop drinking. The foreman agreed.

But what Thomas needed was something more than to sign the pledge. He could sign and then completely ignore what he had done. He needed a new heart. That would influence his whole life and stop his abuse of alcohol. He needed to be made willing to trust in Christ for salvation.

As it was, he was able to earn two or three pounds a week, a good wage at the time. (Remember that the value of money has changed enormously since the time when Thomas was working; note also that one pound was divided into 20 shillings). Thomas usually took home just a pound, or not much more – because he did not often turn up for work until Wednesday morning.

He spent as much of a Sabbath as the law allowed, and parts of Monday and Tuesday, in a pub, leaving very little money to pass on to his wife for family expenses. And when he did begin to work, he could not do much until the following day. Even on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, he could not exert his full energies on his work, because he was short of food; he had spent too much of his money on drink.

The owner and foreman of the foundry had often spoken about dismissing Thomas because of his bad attendance at work. Their threats would have been carried out if Thomas had not been so good at his work, when he was fully sober. Besides it would not have been at all easy to find as able a workman to replace him.

The owner often encouraged Thomas to go to a temperance meeting, but without success. But the foreman decided to do all he could to deliver the drunkard from his foolish ways. The foreman was a sincere Christian man and spoke to Thomas about repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that nothing short of heart holiness, “without which no man shall see the Lord”, would truly change his life.

So he spoke to Thomas about the claims of the gospel. He pointed him to the love of God in giving His only begotten Son (John 3:16). He reminded him of “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He spoke to him about the Holy Spirit, whom God gave “to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement” (John 16:8). He begged Thomas to mark, learn and inwardly digest the contents of the Bible, which is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

But the foreman's efforts did not end in talking. One Saturday, when he was paying the men their wages, Thomas's turn came as usual, and the foreman found that it was an unusually bad week for Thomas. "Well, how is this, Thomas," asked the foreman, "that you have only 14 shillings coming to you this week?"

"I didn't get to work till Thursday, and all the time I have been at it I have felt quite unfit for it," replied Thomas.

"Through your drinking at the beginning of the week?" said the foreman.

"Suppose that is it," Thomas admitted. "All day on Wednesday I was in bed, tormented in body and soul. I shouldn't have come to work at all this week, but couldn't bear to be in bed with myself, and I had no comfort at home."

"Ah, Thomas," said the foreman, "you have long found out that the way of transgressors is hard. How is it you do not cease to do evil, and learn to do well? Just go and sit down by the fire and, when I have settled with all [the men], I shall want to have a little talk with you."

Soon all the men were paid. The foreman then spent a few more minutes recording all these figures in the account books; then he closed them for the week and locked them up. Thomas was now invited into the office.

The foreman told him: "Thomas, you are poorly and need nursing. On account of your evil ways, you have but little at home that will prove to your comfort. Your poor wife would, no doubt, do what she could, but she does not have the means, for you have destroyed or pawned nearly every comfortable piece of furniture."

The foreman proposed to send the 14 shillings of Thomas's wages to his wife. He was to come along to the foreman's house and stay there until the Monday morning. His wife and servant would do their best to nurse him, and by the Monday morning, the foreman hoped Thomas would be a lot better.

Thomas was overwhelmed with this kind offer. He felt so poorly, and he knew that in his own home there would be few comforts that might help him, so he at once agreed. Soon afterwards, the two men were walking towards the foreman's home.

Later the foreman went to Thomas's wife with the 14 shillings and told her what had happened. Although it was small compared to what Thomas could earn, it was much more than she had received of his wages for many months. She was glad to receive the money, for she needed it for her own needs and her children's.

At the foreman's home, Thomas was provided with food and had a bath. Then he went to a clean, comfortable bed, in contrast to his own worn bed-clothes. Everything was so much better than what Thomas had been used to.

Yet the foreman's wage was not very much more than Thomas's would have been if he had been diligent in always going to work and getting on with it.

Next morning Mr Bonning, the foreman, and his family went to church and in the evening he persuaded Thomas to go with him. The sermon was based on these words: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". The minister explained what true repentance is and what its effects are. He spoke too about the results of not repenting. The truth came with power to Thomas's soul. It drew tears from his eyes, and he felt like someone condemned. He knew that what the minister said was right, and that he himself was wrong.

The next morning Thomas Drew went to the foundry at the start of work, the first time he had appeared there on a Monday for a very long time; all noticed this as something very unusual. The owner hoped that this would prove the beginning of better days for him, although he was not confident. He did not realise the power that God had exerted on Thomas's mind.

Thomas returned to his own home in the evening. He knew it would be very different from the home where he had spent the previous two nights. It is true that the furniture was just as he had expected. But it was also true that there was a good supply of plain food to eat. His wife had spent part of the 14 shillings on food, and she had done her best to prepare it nicely. Thomas was really surprised how far a little money would go if properly spent on making one comfortable. He had no idea of this before.

After he had taken his evening meal, he asked his wife if she had a Bible in the house.

"No," she replied, "but I can borrow one."

"If I had the money, I would buy one," he said. "They are to be had for ten pence each."

His wife replied, "I have four or five shillings, [from] the money Mr Bonning gave me on Saturday night," and she put the money into his hand. Without hesitation Thomas went to the Bible shop and bought one. He returned and, when his wife was ready, she and some of the older children sat down, and he read three or four chapters aloud out of the Gospels. Afterwards they all knelt down and Thomas prayed. Though many of the sentences of that could not be understood, yet it is not perfect wording that God pays attention to.

Again the next morning Thomas was at his work. The next Sabbath he went to church. The next Monday morning he went to work. And so it went on. Old things passed away; behold, all things became new. The owner was glad of the change, although he did not realise where it came from. The other workmen had to admit that Thomas had become a very different man. After a while he found peace in his soul through faith in the blood of the Lamb of

God. He progressed in wisdom's ways, and before long he was witnessing a good confession before many witnesses.

Thomas kept on working at the foundry, taking home £3 a week. His became a nice house; he was able to work every day because he was no longer drinking. In fact, he was able to buy his home as he was no longer wasting his money.

On Sabbaths, Thomas went to church with his wife and family. He became a teacher in the Sabbath school and, during another part of the day, he spent time teaching his own children at home.

It would have been good if Thomas had stopped drinking and, with the money saved, had provided a better home for his wife and family. But it was far, far better that he began to follow Christ and that he set out on the way to heaven. That was God's work, giving Thomas a new heart and making him willing to forsake the sin that would probably have killed him before long. Only God could have made him willing to follow Christ.

That is what you need too: to be made willing to forsake your own ways and to trust in Christ as the Saviour of sinners – even if you always keep perfectly sober. He is calling you now: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

John Bunyan

3. Delivered from Temptations

Rev George B Macdonald

This is another part of a paper given to last year's Youth Conference in New Zealand. Last month's section spoke about him being delivered from swearing and told something about his conversion.

*T*emptations. Not long afterwards, Bunyan was afflicted with two fearful temptations. The first was whether he had been elected and the second was whether the time had already passed for him when he could obtain mercy.

Let us now take these in turn, as they much troubled him. He often questioned whether he was among the elect. Others too have been affected by this question. Satan sought to discourage him from seeking God and Christ any further – for if he was not elect, what good would it all do?

Bunyan makes a most enlightening comment in *Grace Abounding* reflecting on this temptation: “By these things I was driven to my wits' end, not knowing what to say or how to answer these torments. Indeed, I little thought that Satan had thus assaulted me, but thought it was my own

prudence thus to start the question. That the elect only obtained eternal life, I without scruple did heartily agree; but that I myself was one of them, there lay the question.”

What is important in this quotation is the reflection: Bunyan thought he was reasoning wisely on this matter but, as he later realised, it was a temptation from Satan, to discourage Him from seeking the Lord. Let us be careful that we, like Bunyan and like Naaman, do not say “Behold I thought . . .”. When the Lord Jesus speaks of the elect in John 6:37, He at once gives the assurance that those who come to Him will in no wise be cast out. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

But the Lord was teaching Bunyan by the Holy Spirit. He describes the Lord teaching him, by a sight of his inward corruption and the plague of his heart, that he could only find peace in Christ. “He showed me I was lost if I did not have Christ, because I was a sinner. I saw that I lacked a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God, and this righteousness was nowhere to be found but in the person of Jesus Christ.”

It was when John Bunyan believed in Jesus, that he found peace. The words of John 6:37, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”, were made precious to him, as they have been to others before and since.

Bunyan writes interestingly about the promises of God in the Bible. In the past he thought he could take nothing from them unless he felt the comfort of the promise; but now, as a man sinking at sea, he caught at all he saw. This is helpful. Comfort from the promises may not come at once, but we should lay hold upon them and upon Christ freely offered in these gospel promises, such as John 6:37.

During a time of sickness, he was afflicted with a senseless, heartless spirit. After he had been in this sad condition for three or four days and was sitting by the fire, he writes, “Suddenly I felt this word sound in my heart, “I must go to Jesus”. At this, my former darkness and atheism fled away, and blessed things of heaven were set in my view. He recalls that Christ was precious to him that night and he could scarcely lie in his bed for joy and peace and triumph.

Hebrews 12:22-24 and John 6 were then precious portions of Scripture to Bunyan's soul. In the passage from Hebrews, we read of Mount Zion, and the city of the living God. Surely the Celestial City in *Pilgrim's Progress* is based on this biblical language: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits

of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22-24)

He writes: “Through this sentence the Lord led me over and over, first to this word [that is, this statement of Scripture] and then to that, and showed me the wonderful glory in every one of them. These words also have often since that time been great refreshment to my spirit. Blessed be God [he adds] for having mercy on me.” By the grace of God, John Bunyan was called to faith in Christ. He gloried much in the righteousness of Christ. The promises of God were most comforting to him.

In 1653, Bunyan joined John Gifford’s congregation in Bedford and he seems to have appreciated the ministry here. He was baptized a second time in 1655 and admitted to full membership. Interestingly, though this was a rebaptism, it appears he did not take the view that only persons baptized by immersion as adults could partake of the Lord’s Supper. He wrote a work published in 1672 titled *Differences in Judgment about Water-Baptism* as part of a dispute he had with some London Baptists.

About Idolaters

3. Worshipping the Idol of Position

Brownlow North

This is another section of an address taken, with editing, from a book about the Prodigal Son. Last month’s article was about those who worship the idol of pleasure. North was, in his youth, thoroughly ungodly but, after being converted, he became a well-known preacher.

Luke 15:14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

Let us now look at the worshipper of position. How different his career! From its beginning he is a man who makes high principle and morality his guide. Never was he known to tell a falsehood, or to deceive, or to do anything that could not bear strict examination. His word has become as good as his bond; he is respected by all who know him; one and all look up to him and trust him.

Perhaps he started life with very little, but by effort and strict attention to his calling he has become rich – rich beyond what he expected. But riches do not satisfy him now: he still needs something. He has worshipped his god faithfully and his god has done great things for him, but he might do something more, and he will aim at getting something more.

Let us assume that he succeeds. The wealth that he has gathered by honest effort is great, so also is the respect in which he is held by all. The position of member of parliament is vacant; he stands for it and is returned. The daughter of a neighbouring nobleman accepts him, and he is married. A peerage is offered him and, according to his fancy, he accepts or rejects it. Royalty comes and visits him.

Is there anything left for his god to do for him? He hardly knows. He has had uninterrupted health through life, but he is getting old. He is past 70, and the thought begins to intrude that he has little time left to enjoy what he has got. He has been wanting and getting all his life, and he has little more to want or get from this world.

But he has still a need: he wants to keep what he has got. He has laid up treasure for himself on earth, and his heart is with his treasure; he does not like to think of leaving it; he wants to stay where his heart is. The god he has worshipped has done a great deal for him, but he cannot help him here; its power was only for the earth, and no earthly power can supply what he now needs. The god that this man worshipped – just like the god of pleasure – has brought this man to need!

Glance at this man on his deathbed. Is he not as poor, wretched, naked and needy as was the dying worshipper of the god of pleasure? By moral uprightness, by the sacrifice of pleasure to principle, by self-denial through life, he has attained a high position among men. His god, to whom he sacrificed, has done for him what it could. As the worshipper of pleasure got his pleasure, so this worshipper of position has got his position; and great, very great, is the difference between what they got. The one got so little, and the other got so much of what the world can give, that it is scarcely speaking too strongly to say that one lost and the other gained the whole world!

But what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Far be it from me to say that there is no difference between the worshipper of pleasure and the worshipper of position. So far as this world is concerned there is a great difference: all the difference between happiness and misery; self-respect and self-loathing; every evil and every good.

Yet when these two worshippers come to their last sickness, when the doctor puts his hand on their pulse and tells them they must die, are you so much of an unbeliever as to say they are not both equally in need? If a man can be saved by moral and upright conduct, then they are not in need.

His own uprightness – doing his duty to himself and his neighbour cannot atone for forgetfulness and neglect of God. Briefly, what Paul says is true, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified. Then, however great the difference was between these men here, when they approach the same

end, *death*, they both are in need, and they both have the same need. They both need what neither of them ever sought, or thought worth seeking – God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the blood that cleanses from all sin, and the obedience in which a man can stand before God and be accounted righteous.

The heart of man is capable of rising out of self-worship, and of living as much for another, as anyone ever lived for himself. But this worship, because it worships and serves the creature more than the Creator, must end in misery and need, like all other forms of worshipping a creature. It is always idolatry – even adoring a wife, a husband, a parent, or a child; or a young woman’s adoration of her fiancé, or some other object lawful to be loved. But once love passes the bounds prescribed by God, it is a breach of the First Commandment – it becomes idolatry, and Scripture calls it “inordinate affection”.

This affection may sometimes appear very beautiful, but it is only so to the natural eye of man. God classes it as one of those things for which “the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Colossians 3:6). God is a jealous God and will not give His glory to another. He does not see as man sees, and what is highly esteemed among men is abomination in His sight.

For Younger Readers

The Boy and His Bible

Long ago a ship sailed into London from America. But some men examined it and decided it was not safe for it to go to sea again.

One of those working on the ship was about 15. Like all the other sailors, there was no more work for him on that ship. He was advised to go to Liverpool, where we might find work on another ship sailing to America.

He started walking to Liverpool, but he had very little money. So he could not buy much food and he was soon hungry. He had to sell off some of the things he was carrying so that he would have money to buy some food.

One day he was passing through a place called Stony Stratford. He saw a man standing at a door and asked him for some help. The man asked, “What is that you have tied up in your handkerchief?”

The boy told him: “That is my Bible”.

“Well, can you sell that? It will help you on your journey.”

“No, I will never part with my Bible, [even] if I sell everything else.” A woman in America had given him the Bible and advised him never to part with it. The boy said, “I love to read it, so I won’t part with that”.

The man gave the boy what he needed. God blessed him by giving him food. It seems that God was blessing the Bible to him as well. Do you value the Bible when you hear it read or when you read it yourself?

For Junior Readers

Naaman the Leper (1)

2 Kings chapter 5 tells the story of Naaman – a story I hope you know well. He is introduced right away, in verse 1: “Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper”.

Lots of things were going well for Naaman. He had reached the peak of his career. If you were a soldier, the highest position you could ever hope to reach would be to become commander of all the army. He was a great man – important, in favour with the king of his country. Honours were heaped on him and he was highly respected because he had led the Syrian army to victory. He was a brave and skilful soldier and commander. But he was a leper.

There were many blessings in Naaman’s life. But nobody is so richly blessed in earthly things that they can somehow escape the trials of life. Illness, sadness, death must come to all, even to the very rich and to the great ones of this world. You may see and hear of people who seem to “have it all”, but whatever the outward show, you may be sure that they too have their trials.

Naaman was richly blessed. But he was a heathen, who knew nothing of the true God or the way of salvation. Maybe it can be said of me and of you: we are blessed – a happy life, interesting things to do, enjoyable books to read, beautiful places to go to, a safe home to rest in, a secure family life to find comfort in.

More than that, it could probably be said, you have the Bible read to you, Sabbaths set apart for you, the gospel preached to you, petitions prayed over

you. *But* though all those things are wonderful and though you are so richly blessed

But Naaman was a leper and that spoiled everything else. It was a terrible disease for which there was no cure. Naaman would just keep getting worse and worse. We have all these pleasant things in life but we have the disease of sin in our souls, and there is no way we can cure ourselves. It spoils everything. It makes us discontented and unthankful, even with the lovely blessings God has given us.

It spills out into our behaviour, so that we use God's gifts in sinful ways. He gave us our hands and we sin with them. He gave us our speech and we sin with unkind words. He gave us our sight, our hearing, our ability to walk and run, our ability to think – and we use these wonderful gifts in sinful ways. Sin spoils everything. And it will just get worse and worse unless God changes us.

So when we read about Naaman, let us not only read it as the true and interesting story of a man who lived a long time ago. It is here in the Bible to teach us far more than just what we can learn about Naaman himself. It is to teach us about ourselves.

The Syrians had raided Israel and had taken captives. One of the important truths we can learn when we read the story of Naaman is how God brings good out of evil. Naaman's leprosy was a horrible thing. The Syrians invading Israel and stealing away a little child was a great evil. How painful the separation must have been for her and her parents. If they were still living, they would have no idea where she was or how she was being treated. She was stolen away and they would likely never see or hear of her again.

She would be a slave in the heathen land of Syria. There people worshipped idols and did not know about the Ten Commandments. This was a horrible change in that child's life. Nobody would have chosen it. Yet God, in his infinite wisdom, decreed that this young girl would come to live in this Syrian home. He had a special work for her to do there.

C Esson

Looking Around Us

Reflecting on the Past

This year is the eightieth anniversary of D-Day, in 1944, when British troops, and the soldiers of other allied nations crossed the English Channel, and invaded France in the hope of pushing back the German Army, who were occupying large parts of Europe. A former chief of the British Army has called this a time to reflect.

It is indeed. God was gracious in delivering Europe from Hitler and his cruelty. But God has given many spiritual blessings and we should remember them and reflect on His goodness in giving these blessings.

In particular, we should reflect repeatedly on His goodness in bringing about the Reformation, when ordinary people in Protestant countries became able to read the Bible freely. They also began again to hear the real teachings of the Word of God. One of the most important of these is the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

This doctrine had been mostly hidden for hundreds of years by the false teachings of Romanism. But Martin Luther specially was the man God used to give publicity to what Scripture teaches about justification – that we sinners cannot earn salvation by our good works. It is by looking to Jesus Christ that we find acceptance with God. Christ did all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners; we cannot add to it. Believers are forgiven because Christ bore the punishment due to the sins of guilty people and He kept the law in their place. Let us reflect with thankfulness on God's goodness in purifying His Church at such times as the Reformation.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2023-24

Exercise 3

All answers from *overseas* should be sent to *Miss Naomi Clemence*, 60 Dougalston Gardens South, Milngavie, Glasgow, G62 6HT; scriptureoverseas@gmail.com. The correctors should have your answers before the end of June. These exercises are based on Joshua 14 to 1 Samuel 25, and Acts 20 to 2 Corinthians 4.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Mrs J Hicklin*, 22 Lasswade Road, Eskbank, EH22 3EF; jmhicklin86@gmail.com.

Old Testament

Read Judges 4.

1. (a) What trouble did Israel find themselves in at the beginning of chapter 4? (3)
- (b) What reason is given for this? (2)
2. (a) What judge did God raise up at this time? (2)
- (b) In what two ways is she different from the other judges in this book? (see verse 4) (2)
3. What message does she send to Barak in verses 6-7? (3)
4. (a) How does Barak respond? (3)
- (b) Do you think that was the right response? Why? (3)
5. What would the consequence be of Deborah's accompanying him? (2)
6. In verses 14-16 we read about Israel's victory over Sisera's forces. What cause is given for Israel's surprising victory? (1)
7. What further information are we given in verse 21 of chapter 5 about how God did this? (1)
8. In your own words describe how Sisera was killed, and the events leading up to this, in verses 17-21. (8)

Read Judges 5

9. In chapter 5 we have Deborah and Barak's song. What is the main purpose of the song? (1)

10. God had avenged Israel of their enemies. When did he do this? (See verse 2) (1)

New Testament

In 1 Corinthians we read Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, an important wealthy city, but well known for its wickedness.

1. How does he describe the church in chapter 1, verse 2? (3)
2. What does he thank God for in verses 3-8? (4)
3. There seems to have been many problems in the Corinthian church. Paul addresses some of them in this letter. What does he address in chapter 1:10-12? (3)
4. What do "them that perish" think of preaching? (1)
5. What is preaching to "them which are called"? (see verse 24) (2)
6. Why does Paul emphasise the weakness of preaching and of those who God has called? (See verses 29-31) (2)
7. What does Paul say about himself in chapter 2 verses 2-4? (2)
8. The wisdom of God is spoken "in a mystery". What evidence does he give in verse 8 that the princes of the world did not know or see this? (1)
9. How does God reveal this wisdom to us? (See verse 10) (1)
10. Find and write out a verse near the beginning of chapter 3 in which Paul gives all the glory of believer's growth to God. (3)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 89 in the Shorter Catechism: How is the Word made effectual to salvation? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Munro, 3 Borge, Isle of Harris, HS3 3HT; morag.rothach@hotmail.co.uk*.

Old Testament

1. Read Ruth 1.
 - (a) What were the names of the family who moved from Bethlehem-Judah to Moab? (2)
 - (b) Why did they move? (2)
 - (c) What changes came into Naomi's family circle while she was in Moab? (3)
 - (d) When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem, what did each of her daughters-in law do? (3)
 - (e) What was the only thing that Ruth would let separate between her and Naomi? (1)
 - (f) Naomi wanted to be called "Mara", why? (2)
2. (a) Read Ruth 2. Into whose field did Ruth go to glean and how did he greet her? (verses 3-9) (3)
 - (b) How did he tell the young men to treat Ruth? (verses 15-17) (3)
 - (c) How did Naomi react when Ruth came home? (verses 19-20) (3)
3. Read Ruth 4 verses 13-17. Who was Ruth's famous great grandson? (1)

New Testament

1. Read Acts 21:1-15.
 - (a) At Tyre and again at Caesarea, Paul was given a warning about his onward journey. What was the warning? (1)
 - (b) Describe the illustration Agabus used to warn him. (2)
 - (c) What was Paul's response to their appeals? (2)
2. Read Acts chapter 23.
 - (a) How did the Sadducees' belief about the resurrection differ from the Pharisees'? (v8) (3)
 - (b) There was a conspiracy to kill Paul (verses 12 -24). Explain (1) what it was; (2) how it was discovered; (3) how it was foiled. (2,2,3)
3. Read Acts 24:24-27.
 - (a) Which doctrines did Paul preach to Felix? (3)
 - (b) What was Felix's reaction? (2)
4. Read chapter 26.
 - (a) Paul was permitted to speak for himself in front of King Agrippa. What effect did

- Paul's preaching have on King Agrippa? (v 28) (2)
 (b) What should we learn from the actions of Felix and Agrippa? (2)

Memory Exercise

- Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 38 in the Shorter Catechism:
 What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Logan, 21 Leys Drive, Inverness, IV2 3JB; moira.logan@btinternet.com*

Old Testament

1. Read Judges 7:1-20.
 - (a) What nation did Gideon deliver the children of Israel from? (1)
 - (b) How many soldiers did he have when he went to fight? (1)
 - (c) Why did God want him to have so few soldiers? (see verse 2) (1)
 - (d) What three things did the soldiers carry with them when they went to fight? (3)
 - (e) What did they do with these three things at the time of battle? (3)
2. From the book of Ruth, complete the following table:

<i>The Words Spoken</i>	<i>Spoken by</i>	<i>Spoken to</i>
Go, return each one to her mother's house (chapter 1)		
Intreat me not leave thee, or to return from following after thee (chapter 1)		
The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me (chapter 1)		
Why have I found grace in thine eyes? (chapter 2)		
Let her glean even among the sheaves (chapter 2)		

(10)

3. Read 1 Samuel chapter 8.
 - (a) Give two reasons why the Israelites wanted a king? (verse 5) (2)
 - (b) How did Samuel feel about their request? (1)
 - (c) What answer did the Lord give Samuel? (see verses 7-9) (2)
 - (d) Give one lesson we can learn from this chapter. (1)

New Testament

1. Read about the shipwreck in Acts chapter 27.
 - (a) What was the name of the centurion who had charge of the prisoners? (1)
 - (b) How did the centurion show kindness to Paul? (1)
 - (c) What was Euroclydon? (1)
 - (d) In verse 21, Paul says, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me and not have loosed from Crete". Find the verse, earlier in the chapter, when he gave them this advice and write it out. (2)
 - (e) Who said to Paul: "Fear not; thou must be brought before Caesar"? (1)
 - (f) How many people were in the ship? (1)
 - (g) Why would the centurion not allow the soldiers to kill any of the prisoners? (1)
2. In Romans chapter 10, read verses 13-15, where there is a chain of truths in which each is linked to the next. Now read the following passage and write down the missing words. The same number indicates the same word. (Work backwards.)
 If preachers are not (1) by God, they cannot (2)
 If preachers do not (2), the people will not (3)
 If people do not (3), how shall they (4)?
 If the people do not (4), how shall they (5) on the name of the Lord?

If they do not (5) on the name of the Lord, they will not be (6). (6)

3. Read 1 Corinthians chapter 15 v 35-49

(a) *Corruption* is one word used to describe the body of a believer as it is laid in the grave.

Find three more words used to describe the believer's body at death. (3)

(b) Now find four words used to describe the same body as it is raised again at the resurrection. (4)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 53 in the Shorter Catechism:

Which is the third commandment? (3)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Schouten, 58 Fairfield Road, Inverness, IV3 5QW.*

mary.schouten59@gmail.com.

Old Testament

1. Read Ruth 1:1,2. Why did Elimelech and his family move from Israel to Moab? (1)

2. Read Ruth 1:2-5. Give the names of the three men who died in Moab. (1)

3. From these verses write out the number of years that they lived there. (1)

4: Read Ruth 1:8-11. Naomi decided to move back to her own country. Orpah and Ruth went with her part of the way. What did she want her daughters-in-law to do? (1)

5. Read Ruth 1:15-18 and fill in the missing word: Orpah chose to leave Naomi but Ruth chose to stay with her because she loved her people and her _____. (1)

6. Read Ruth 1:19-21. Naomi wanted to be called a different name. Write it out and give its meaning. (2)

7. Read Ruth 2:1-3.

(a) What work did Ruth find to do? (1)

(b) What was special about Boaz? (1)

8. Read Ruth 2:10-12. Boaz knew good things about Ruth. Write out two of these. (2)

9. Read Ruth 4:6-9. Ruth and Boaz decided to marry but, before they could do so, they had to get permission from another family member in front of the city elders. What sign was given that Boaz could marry Ruth? (1)

10. Read Ruth 4:13-17. Fill in the missing word: Ruth and Boaz's son Obed became the grandfather of the famous King _____. (1)

New Testament

1. Read Acts 22:3-13, where Paul tells of how Christ met him.

Put the following sentences in the correct order.

A. I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.

B. I heard a voice saying Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

C. Ananias said, Brother Saul, receive thy sight.

D. Near Damascus a light from heaven shone around me.

E. I was persecuting Christians and bringing them to prison.

F. I answered, Who art thou Lord? (6)

2. Read Romans 12:9-21. Match up the two parts of these verses.

(a) Abhor that which is evil and weep with them that weep.

(b) Bless them which persecute you cleave to that which is good.

(c) Rejoice with them that do rejoice but overcome evil with good.

(d) Be not overcome of evil bless, and curse not. (4)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to Question 98 in the Shorter Catechism:

What is prayer? (3)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs R J Dickie, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Lewis, HS1 2NP.*
annemndickie@gmail.com.

Old Testament

God told Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be King.

1. How many of his sons did Jesse bring to Samuel? 1 Samuel 16:10
2. Did God choose any of them? 1 Samuel 16:10
3. People look on the outward appearance. What does the Lord look on?
1 Samuel 16:7
4. Jesse's youngest son was not there. Which animals was he looking after?
1 Samuel 16:11
5. When Jesse brought his youngest son in to Samuel, he took the horn of oil and anointed him. What was this son's name? 1 Samuel 16:13
6. When he was looking after his father's sheep, which two animals took a lamb out of the flock? 1 Samuel 17:34
7. Did David kill the two fierce animals? 1 Samuel 17:36
8. Who saved David from the paw of the lion and the bear? 1 Samuel 17:37

New Testament

Soldiers were taking Paul prisoner to Rome, but their ship was wrecked on an island called Melita.

1. The islanders were heathens, but they showed kindness to those who had escaped from the sea. Fill in the words. They kindled (lit) a f____ because of the present r____, and because of the c____. Acts 28:2
2. When they saw a viper (poisonous snake) on Paul's hand, they wrongly thought he was being punished for being wicked. Was Paul hurt by the snake? Acts 28:5
3. Publius, the chief man of the island was kind to Paul and his friends. How many days did they lodge with him? Acts 28:7
4. Publius's father was very sick. When Paul prayed and laid his hands on him, was he healed? Acts 28:8
5. Paul and the others went by ship to Rome later on. Paul was a prisoner but he had done nothing wrong. Instead of being in a usual prison he was allowed to stay by h____ with a s____ that k____ him. Acts 28:16
6. Could Paul still preach about Jesus? Acts 28:30,31
7. Did some of the people believe what was spoken? Acts 28:24

Price £1.40