

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



June 2024

Vol 89 • No 6

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Cover picture: John Bunyan's grave in Bunhill Fields, London. See page 106.

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

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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.

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Volume 89

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A Sure Anchor

Andrew was a sailor on various sailing ships carrying cargoes to and from ports in lots of different countries across the world. By present-day standards, these ships of the early 1800s were very small. This made sailing in them much more dangerous than in the much larger ships that cross the oceans today.

One of Andrew's voyages began in Brixham, a port in Devon, where he had been born. The ship that Andrew sailed on was called the *Samuel*; it was bound for the north-east of England, where it was to pick up a cargo of coal – at a time when there were many coalmines in that area of the country – and bring the coal back to Brixham.

Everything went well till the ship reached beyond Yarmouth, a fishing port in Norfolk, on the east coast of England. The wind rose and blew very hard indeed. To make things worse, the ship was full of leaks. All that the captain and his crew could do was to turn the ship around and make for Yarmouth Roads, a place where they hoped to find some shelter from the terrible gale.

Later in life, Andrew was a godly man and knew what was the most important thing to do in a dangerous situation. That was to turn to God in prayer and ask Him for protection. This is, of course, what we should all do in every time of difficulty. Indeed we should always be praying to God, for the sake of Jesus, who can watch over us and preserve us not only from natural dangers like storms, but also from falling into sin.

How much people are missing who do not go to God in prayer, not only when things seem difficult, but when things seem to be going smoothly. We do not know what lies in our future, but God does; He knows everything about it. So we should be asking Him repeatedly to take care of us. We can do so little to take care of ourselves, but God can take care of us in every way, in every situation.

How helpful it is if we can realise that God is in control over everything, that nothing can happen against His will! So Jesus reminded His disciples that two sparrows were sold for just a farthing, very little money. And then He said, "One of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Mt 10:29). Yes, God *is* in control of everything, including little things like

sparrows. And, if we can trust Him and pray to Him about everything, what a support that will be to us, especially in times of trouble!

But at the time of the storm, Andrew was altogether ungodly. He had no love for God and paid no attention to the teachings of the Bible. And perhaps more than at any other time in his life, Andrew needed God's care and protection during this violent storm. Yet he went through the whole of the storm as a rebel against the One who was keeping him safe. Yet Andrew probably did not think of praying to God for His protection and, if he did, he had no trust in the power of God to help him. And it is most unlikely that Andrew thought of thanking God for protecting him and his ship while the wind was blowing so hard.

Many other ships, as well as the *Samuel*, went for shelter in the Yarmouth Roads. The *Samuel* did not reach Yarmouth Roads; it became very dark, and the crew were afraid that their ship would sink and that they would drown. So they put down their two anchors off Winterton Point, where there would have been some shelter, in the hope of riding out the storm until daylight would come. Many other ships were at anchor and close to each other; so there was a great danger of one ship smashing into another.

About 11 am the next day, the wind rose perhaps higher than ever, and the *Samuel* was only kept by her anchors from being blown away. Another ship, larger than the *Samuel*, presumably not held in place by an anchor, was blown away and grounded on a sandbank. Its bottom was knocked out there; soon it disappeared beneath the waves, and all the crew were drowned. But the *Samuel* was kept safe by its anchors until the worst of the danger was past and then it was able to sail into the safety of Yarmouth Harbour.

Probably many years later, Andrew was converted, and he was able to look back on his past life, and his thoughts were in many ways different from how he looked on the various events as they happened. Now he looked on these things in the light of the Bible. Time and again he would have thought of that terrible night near Yarmouth, when he and the rest of the crew could only hope that their anchors would keep them from being blown away onto a sandbank, into another ship, onto the land, or away to the open sea, where they could not keep control of the ship.

There are some Bible verses where a comparison is made between a ship's anchor and a believer's hope in God. You will find the verses at the end of Hebrews 6: "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable [or, unchangeable] things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of

the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil [into heaven]; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”.

The promise and the oath were originally made to Abraham. They were a pattern of the good things that believers can hope for. Believers hope especially for spiritually good things. That is what they have a right to expect, because of what Jesus Christ has purchased for them. They can expect the forgiveness of all their sins; they can expect to be made perfectly holy when they leave this world; they can expect God to supply all their real needs; they can expect to get to heaven at last. And it is all because of what Christ has done for them.

And that hope is sure, especially because God has confirmed it by two things that cannot change. God has made a promise, and that cannot be broken. What is more, God has made an oath, and that too is sure. Neither of them can possibly be changed.

If an anchor catches the bottom of the sea, the ship is normally secure; so it is a picture of the hope of the believer. But the believer's hope is *always* secure because it is like the cable of an anchor running up into heaven, where Jesus has gone before His people. The spiritual blessings He has obtained for them are sure for every one of His people.

All their sins *will* be forgiven; Christ has borne the burden of them all; none of their sins will be left as the responsibility of any of His children. All of these children *will* be made perfectly holy; the Holy Spirit is sure to wash away all the corruptions that have troubled them throughout their lives in this world. God *will* bring them all to heaven at last; He cannot lose any of them by the way. And God *will* give all of them all the good things He sees that they really need from the ordinary things of this life. Yes, all of God's promises are doubly sure because of His oath.

But are these blessings yours? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul? Do you feel you need to benefit from His saving work? Go to Him now. He is calling you. He is saying to you: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Remember, everyone who believes in Christ is sure to be saved; they will be safe throughout their lives in this world; they will be safe at death; they will be safe throughout eternity. Remember too that those who refuse to believe will not be safe – not in this world, or at death, or in eternity. You still have the opportunity of finding salvation, while you still have the opportunity of hearing the gospel. Make use now of what may be your last opportunity. The storm of death may meet you far sooner that you expect and you may swept away into eternity. Look to Christ now.

John Bunyan

4. Becomes a Minister

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 God delivering Bunyan from various temptations and about him becoming a member of a church in Bedford.

*P*reacher. Bunyan had been brought through many perplexing temptations on the journey to faith in the Redeemer. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the Lord was preparing him for a useful ministry. He had been afflicted with temptations in relation to atheism, whether he was among the elect, whether the day of grace was past for him, among others. He had in his youth been a very profane man, much given to the use of bad language. He was brought, it seems, to a particularly vivid view of the way of salvation, including the fearful danger of hell for the wicked and the glory of the cross of Christ. The Lord was equipping him for the work of the ministry.

In *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan also deals with his call to the ministry. It is therefore a useful book for ministers and those considering whether they have a call to the ministry. Indeed, it is one of the books that divinity students in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland are required to read, and be examined on, by their Presbytery.

Bunyan felt a restlessness of spirit in connection with a strong desire for the work of the ministry. It appears that, following the death of John Gifford, members in his local congregation had also encouraged him to preach. He was given an opportunity to preach among them and also in other churches. He says he could not be content unless found in the exercise of his gift to preach. He found 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 a great encouragement to him. This reads: "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth".

He writes: "By this text I was made to see that the Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and abilities should bury them in the earth, but rather did command and stir up such to the exercise of their gift, and so did commend those that are apt and ready to do so." Doubtless, this needs the caution that gifts alone will never make a man a minister; and graceless ministers, although gifted, have done much damage to the cause of Christ. But Bunyan had grace and gifts and he felt a call to the work of preaching the gospel.

As a preacher, Bunyan had great success from the first. He had zeal and

earnestness. Souls were edified and sinners saved. Helpfully, he gives us his thoughts on preaching and his approach to it. He says simply: “The Lord did lead me to begin where His Word begins – with sinners – to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God by the law does belong to and lay hold of all men as they come into the world, because of sin.”

He speaks of the terrors of the law weighing heavy on his own conscience even as he preached to others: “I went, myself in chains, to preach to them in chains, and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to be aware of”.

For about two years he preached what we would call the law, preaching against sin and warning sinners. His preaching seemed to mirror his own experience. He had been through a solemn law work, and whilst brought to Christ and doubtless preaching Christ these two years, yet the terrors of the law still lay heavy on him. After this, the Lord gave him much peace and comfort through Christ.

His preaching altered, for he still preached what he saw and felt. Now he said, “Therefore I did much labour to hold forth Jesus Christ in all His offices, relations and benefits unto the world, and did strive also to discover, to condemn and to remove those false supports and props on which they fall and perish. On these things I stayed as on the other.”

We observe that Bunyan now preached both law and gospel. We also see the connection in this emotional man between what he felt and preached. This reminds us that preaching is more than an intellectual lecture. Doubtless, Bunyan preached with feeling. God sends to us preachers who are men of like passions and feelings with their hearers. Bunyan also preached as the Lord led him. The subject matter was what he strongly felt the Lord impressed upon him to preach. This too is instructive to preachers of the Word.

Bunyan was earnest in his desire that the Word would be blessed to his hearers. He writes, “I thank God my heart has often, with great earnestness, of this and the other exercises, cried to God that He would make the Word effectual to the salvation of souls, still being grieved lest the enemy should take the Word away from the conscience, and thus it should become unfruitful. Wherefore I laboured so to speak the Word as that whereby, if it were possible, the sin and person guilty might be particularised by it.”

His preaching was doubtless warm and vigorous in application. John Owen once said about Bunyan to King Charles II, “May it please your Majesty, could I possess that tinker’s abilities for preaching, I would most gladly relinquish [give up] all my learning.”

It would appear that Bunyan was also alive to the danger of being puffed up by praise of his preaching, as the following anecdote indicates. One day when he had preached "with peculiar warmth and enlargement," some of his friends came to shake hands with him after the service, and observed to him what "a sweet sermon" he had delivered. "Aye!" he replied, "you need not remind me of that; for the devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit." Just when Bunyan was in the early years of preaching, suddenly he was arrested for conducting unlawful preaching and cast into prison.

The Stormy Night

The most remarkable instance of seeking God earnestly for a long time, that an American minister knew about, was a young married woman. She began to be serious soon after he visited her at her home for the first time. She told him afterwards that the conversation he then had with her was the only influence that caused her to make up her mind that she would seek the Lord. And she was convinced that she must not stop till she believed she was indeed saved.

The special influence on her was the assurance he gave her during that first conversation that salvation was within her reach – that she might be a Christian if she would, that she would not seek the Lord in vain – if she would only seek Him with all her heart. "You told me," she told the minister years afterwards, "I should not seek God in vain. Your words were (I remember it well, and always shall): 'I know that you will be saved if you seek God with all your heart'."

She tried to do so. She came to the minister's house for conversation with him about salvation, almost every Sabbath evening for nearly two years. One evening in the depth of winter, she came nearly half a mile alone to his house. It was a cold, stormy night, the wind blowing strongly, the snow drifting onto the path, in places more than two feet in depth (as I found on accompanying her home). It was one of the most unpleasant and even terrific nights for a woman to be outside. As I opened the door to let her in that stormy night, I said in surprise, "Why, are you here on such a night?"

I said many months afterwards: "I shall never forget the severe, deserved rebuke which she unknowingly gave me". She was referring to her question. "It stumbled me", said she; "I did not know what to make of it. You had invited me there, and I thought you would be expecting me. I thought you ought not to be surprised to see me there, if sinners were in danger of the everlasting wrath of God and might escape it, as you had preached that day.

“It was a long time before I could get over that stumbling-block. I thought if you had believed what you preached, and felt about it as I did, you would *expect* to see me. I know it was a stormy night and I was afraid; but I kept thinking, as I went, that the day of judgement would bring a worse storm, as you said once in your sermon, ‘hailstones and coals of fire’.” This she said to me more than a year afterwards, and after she had attained hope in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

At the same time, she told me something else which added keenness to her unintentional rebuke. She said that her husband (at this time an irreligious man) was very unwilling that she should venture out on that stormy night. He strongly urged to stay at home, when he found she intended to go. “But”, said she, “he told me afterwards that going to your house that night was the first thing that brought him to reflection. He thought there must be something about sin and religion which he did not know anything about, if I would go to your house in such a storm all alone.

I did not know of it at that time; but when he told me afterwards, I remembered that he looked cross when I came home, and I thought he was angry because I went. But I was not going to mind *that*. I knew I had done rightly, and I was not going to let anything turn me aside from trying to be a Christian. And don’t you remember, three Sabbath nights after that, he came to your house with me?”

Month after month, this woman’s deep anxiety continued. I never could discover why she lingered so long in her unbelief. Again and again, I aimed as carefully as possible to tell her all the truths of the gospel, and to find out what error or temptation kept her from repentance and peace with God. But I never could find out. She never could tell me, then or afterwards, of any difficulty or temptation which had troubled her, except the expression I used that stormy night. In justice to her, I ought to say that she did not mention it as having been a hindrance, though she called it a stumbling-block.

It was a most painful and perplexing thing to discharge my pastoral duty to this woman. I could understand her state of mind. She was frank; she hid nothing; she told me all her heart; she wanted me to ask her questions. Besides, she was an intelligent, well-educated woman, brought up by religious parents. I could not guess what kept her in her unbelief, since she had for so long known the truth and had such powerful strivings of the Holy Spirit. What then could I say to her? How could I hope to do her any good?

She came to me so many times, and I had so often told her all that I knew about the way of salvation and so often reminded her of every motive in the gospel. I had so often urged her to cast herself upon Christ that I did not know what more to say or do. Time after time I was half sorry to see her

come into my house, and then ashamed of myself because my heart had such a feeling. I did not know what to do. At one time I was at the point of telling her that I had nothing more to say to her and that she did not need to come to me again. But I could not do it.

She was so miserable, so sincere, so determined, docile and confiding that it was impossible for me to cast her off. I afterwards rejoiced that I had not done it. Her husband became godly; her sister and some other friends began to seek God after she did; yet she remained the same unhappy, unconverted sinner. She did not make progress and she did not go back. Time after time I assured her that she did not need to linger and she would gain nothing for doing so, but she was to trust herself to the arms of Christ – that “without faith it is impossible to please” God, or gain anything of profit to her soul.

A hundred times I warned her most solemnly against putting any trust in her going on seeking. I told her that she was persevering in the wrong course while continuing in unbelief, and the further she went, the worse her condition would be. Time after time, I spoke to her with the Bible in my hand and she in tears before me. I spoke as a minister of God and on His authority. I offered her a free salvation and demanded that, from the heart, she believe on Christ, and submit at once to God's authority and unbounded love. To her mind, her conscience and her heart, I emphasised the kindness of Christ. I explained to her such parts of the Scriptures as the parable of the marriage which a king made for his son, and the parable of the prodigal son who, in a far country, began to be in need.

As far as I could discover, she had for many weary months a full conviction of all the great doctrines of the Bible: of the entire corruption of her sin and danger under the law as a condemned sinner, of the impossibility of being saved except by Christ, and of the full and free salvation offered to her, on the ground of the great atonement. I have never spent half so much time with any other awakened sinner, or quoted to anyone else half as many threatenings and promises of God, or kneeled with any other person as many times in prayer. But, so far as I know, she never received any benefit from it at all, unless it was a benefit which she one day suggested long afterwards, when she said, “If you had been discouraged with me, *I* should have been discouraged, and should have given up.

She persevered. She became a child of hope and peace. She united herself with the people of God; and now, after more than 13 years, she still lives in the enjoyment of Christian hope. Neither she nor I, nor indeed her husband, will ever forget that stormy night.

We are sinners who deserve eternal punishment because of our sins. We ought therefore to seek the Lord earnestly and urgently, according to Isaiah

55:6,7. We must become convinced, through reading the Bible and listening to the preaching of the gospel, that salvation is through Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ alone. Even if we cannot see any evidence that we have found salvation, we must go on seeking Him; we must never give up. He assures us: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

Let us also note our absolute need of the work of the Holy Spirit to apply to our souls what we read and hear about sin and salvation. Our own efforts will not save us; we must not trust in what we imagine we can do, but we must continue to seek the Lord earnestly.

Except for the last paragraph, this article is adapted from *The Christian Treasury*.

For Younger Readers

Could She Stop Praying?

She was a poor old woman. She had very little money, and I am sure she could have done with new clothes or nice things for her house. But she loved the Lord Jesus very much.

One day, a man said to her: “Well, Betsy, if you won’t pray all day today, I’ll give you half a sovereign”. And that was quite a lot of money.

Was Betsy attracted by the money?

No, she could not stop praying, even for just one day. No matter how much money or other things she was offered, Betsy had to keep on praying; she could not stop.

Instead she would go and pray for the man. She said to him: “I’ll just go and ask the Lord to help you to believe on Him, and then you’ll love prayer as much as I do”.

You ask God to help you to believe on Him and to teach you how to pray to Him.

For Junior Readers

Naaman the Leper (2)

In 2 Kings chapter 5 we read the story of Naaman – a story I hope you know well. The first article, last month, spoke about Naaman as the successful leader of Syria’s army. But he was a leper; he suffered from the terrible disease of leprosy. It is a picture of the disease of sin which afflicts our souls. There was a girl in his house who had been captured from Israel.

The girl was servant to Naaman’s wife. She told her mistress that there was a prophet called Elisha back in Israel who could cure Naaman’s terrible

disease. Elisha's miracles must have been very widely known for even a young girl to have heard about them and to tell of them in the land where she had been taken as a prisoner.

I want you to notice three other things about verse 3: first, this child was kind to her master, though it was very unkind to steal her from her home and family. She did not repay them for what the Syrians had done to her.

Second, notice how God can use a young child. A child can do God's work. She spoke in her own small way – it seemed not to be worth noticing. Yet a little girl can do great things for the Lord.

And, third, note that it is no accident that these details are recorded in the Bible. 2 Kings 5 is part of God's Word – part of what God is saying to us. And God Himself put here on purpose this little detail about it being a young girl who told Naaman's wife about Elisha. He wants us to know this detail. He wants all the girls who read 2 Kings to know this detail.

Naaman set off in a large crowd to Israel, taking plenty of costly gifts. He was determined to get the Israelite prophet to work a miracle which would cure him. He arrived at the court of the King of Israel and told the reason for his visit. Of course, the King of Israel could do nothing to cure Naaman. Perhaps Naaman assumed that such a prophet, who cured diseases, would be present in the Israelite King's court or somewhere very close by.

The King of Israel was afraid. He suspected that it was all just an attempt to bring about war. To understand wrongly a person's intentions or meaning can cause all sorts of fears and problems. It is best to try to interpret in the best possible light what people say and do. It was to the King of Israel's shame that he did not at once think of Elisha. If the slave girl could remember the prophet in her captivity, surely the King of Israel might have remembered him too!

Somehow, Elisha heard about Naaman's arrival. "Let [the captain] come now to me," he said, "and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." I am sure it was God's honour that Elisha had in mind when he said that. He was a prophet of the one true and living God, who has power over all disease and sickness.

You can imagine quite a grand arrival at Elisha's house. There was the commander of the Syrian army, with all his splendid show of wealth and the horses and chariots. You can imagine all the people coming out to watch as all of this went by. Then it came to a halt at the door of Elisha's house. But Naaman was very disappointed. No prophet came out to meet him or to work some wonderful cure.

Salvation by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone, is not what the natural human heart wants. Here was a prophet who would not even come out to see Naaman but just sent a servant to carry his message. This was not

Naaman's idea of a cure. It was too humbling. It was too simple. It was not impressive enough. Neither was washing in the River Jordan – and not once, but seven times!

The New Testament, in 1 Corinthians, says that it is by the “foolishness of preaching” that sinners are saved. Luke tells us that the work of God's Spirit is as yeast in a lump of dough – silent, invisible and seeming not to be significant. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways. His way of salvation does not appeal to our sinful nature. Naaman had reached a point where he knew nothing else would work; he could not be cured in any other way.

Even so, he still had to be persuaded to try what the prophet directed. He actually got into his chariot and rode away from Elisha's house in a rage, angry and with no intention of washing in the Jordan. His pride very nearly cost him his cure. If we have greatness in this world, it is only because God has given it. As King Nebuchadnezzar said, in the Book of Daniel, “Those that walk in pride [God] is able to abase” – to bring down.

Fifteen Years More

What is the use of a prayer meeting? There are many uses. Believers are encouraged and strengthened; the cause of God is kept up; the truth of God is watered after it is sown; and prosperity is rained down through the opened windows of heaven, according to the Lord's promise.

In the beginning of the year 1799, the godly minister, Thomas Charles of Bala in Wales, lost a thumb through frostbite. Alarming symptoms appeared, and his friends feared that his life was in danger. A special prayer meeting was arranged. Earnest petitions were offered to God for him, and one person in particular, an old man, was much noted for his very importunate prayer (like the woman Jesus spoke about at the start of Luke 18).

Referring to the 15 years added to King Hezekiah's life, he pleaded with the Lord to spare Mr Charles' life for at least 15 years. He repeated the following words with such importunity as greatly impressed all present: “Fifteen years more, O Lord! We beseech Thee to add 15 years more to the life of Thy servant. And wilt Thou not, O our God, give 15 years more, for the sake of Thy church and Thy cause.”

The prayers of the loving people were heard, and Charles set to work again with renewed vigour. He often said he must be diligent, as the 15 years would soon be up.

As this period drew near its close, he often mentioned it in conversation;

and about a year before his death, he spoke freely and fully to the poor man who, in 1799, had so fervently asked God to prolong his life. He often expressed a desire to live to see his Welsh Bible printed. "Then I will be content", he said, "to lay my head upon my pillow and die."

He did live to see it completed; and the last words he ever wrote were, "It is finished", speaking about his Welsh Bible. What is specially remarkable, Thomas Charles died within a week of the close of 15 years from the date of the poor man's prayer.

It was during this term of 15 years that Thomas Charles did the most important work of his life, labour that bears fruit all over the world to the present day. He wrote several books, organised Sabbath schools throughout Wales, translated the Bible into Welsh, and was used, with others, in the establishment of the Bible Society.

It was through him that Wales was supplied with the Word of God; and many distant lands have blessed the name of Thomas Charles. Who can tell the full results of that earnest prayer of a simple old Welsh Christian? Remember, this was at a prayer-meeting.

Adapted from *Cheering Words* for 1986

About Idolaters

4. What Is the Remedy?

Brownlow North

This is the first 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 position. This is the final section of this series. 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.*

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ's word shall not pass away. He has declared, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me". He that loves wife or children, brother or sister – or His own life – more than Christ, cannot be His disciple.

Not only under the New Testament, but under the Old; not only under the Christian dispensation, but since the world began, has this been the truth of God: that the one who worships the creature – let his worship take what form it may – has the curse of God resting on him. What I say may sound strange and strong language to many, but it is true; for "thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart

departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited” (Jeremiah 17:5,6).

Not only in today, but since the world began, how many broken hearts, deceived, desolated, disappointed in, or deserted by their idol, have felt the power of this curse! It is on them; and fly from it as they may, it follows them. In the crowded gathering or alone in their room, it is the same; as is the heath in the desert, so is everything around and about them a desert. The world is to them a wilderness, and they themselves are as a parched place.

They have a heart that can love and worship, but they have no object to love and worship; they have lost their idol and they have no God. Their inner man is as a land sown with salt; their soul is blank, empty, not inhabited.

Reader, does your heart tell you you have been worshipping an idol? The curse says that such people “shall not see when good cometh”. And what is to become of you if that curse remains on you? The eyes of your soul will remain blind, and you will never see good – will never see God. Good has come to you at this moment; indeed, God Himself has come; for God and good are one. And there is none good but One, and that is God. He has come to you to put you in mind, through the words you are reading, of the curse that is on the idolater, and to urge you by the warnings of that curse to give up your idol.

If you will give up your idol and turn to God, He will repent of the evil pronounced against you. He has promised to do so: “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them” (Jeremiah 18:7,8). Now if against a nation, then against an individual. And if your heart accuses you of the idolatry, and you feel that you are under its curse, look at once to Christ, who now offers Himself to you, and He will come in and dwell with you and supply all your need.

If you continue to cling to your idol or to remember your idol, you must be in need for ever, in “the pit wherein is no water”. But if you receive Christ and turn to God, there shall be fullness instead of emptiness; blessing instead of curse; “the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water”. “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree”; “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad . . . and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose” (Zechariah 9:11; Isaiah 35:7; 55:13, 35:1).

In conclusion, I repeat – no matter what the form of the idolatry – that he who spends his power, his riches, his wisdom, his strength solely on any

earthly thing, squanders God's substance. And, like the Prodigal, he will some day find that he has spent all, that there is a mighty famine and that he is in need.

Historical Tour of Stirling

Rev D W B Somerset

Once again, this year's Youth Conference took place at Strathallan School, near Perth. On April 10, the Conference went on a tour of Church history sites in Stirling.

1. Stirling Castle. The tour started in the car park of Stirling Castle. The castle is most impressive, and well worth a visit. It played an important role in the wars of independence with England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – associated with the names of William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, and Edward I – but it has had less significance in Scottish Church history. It was unsuccessfully besieged by Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1746. Both James IV and James V spent a lot of money on it as a palace, and some of that splendour has been restored in recent years. Mary Queen of Scots was crowned there in 1543 at the age of nine months, and it remained in royal hands during the Reformation struggle of 1559. Contrary to a notice in the castle, the chapel was not reformed by “a Protestant mob” at the Reformation. In the 1570s, the young James VI was brought up there under the tuition of the famous Scottish Protestant scholar George Buchanan.

2. Argyll's Lodging. Just down the hill from the castle is an impressive town house which has been closed for “essential maintenance” since 2017. It had various owners but was eventually bought in the 1660s by Archibald Campbell, 9th Earl of Argyll. He extended it and did it up as a grand house with painted decorations, many of which survive. He was a moderate supporter of the Covenanters, and had to flee to Holland in 1681. In 1685, he led an unsuccessful invasion of Scotland against James VII, and was captured and executed in Edinburgh. His body was placed in the Magdalen Chapel on its way to the family burying-place in Kilmun.

3. Mar's Wark. Further down the Castle Wynd is the façade of an even grander town house. This is known as Mar's Wark and it belonged to the Earl of Mar, who was the Regent of Scotland from 1570 to 1572. As Lord John Erskine, he was an early Protestant, signing one of the first “Bands” or “Covenants” before the Reformation. He was the Keeper of Edinburgh Castle, but in the Reformation struggle of 1559, he proved a disappointment to the Protestants, insisting that Edinburgh Castle remain neutral. After Mary

Queen of Scots gave up the throne in 1567, there were four regents in succession: Moray, Lennox, Mar and Morton. Regent Mar died in this house in 1572.

Mar's daughter-in-law was Marie Stewart, Countess of Mar, who also lived in the house, although the Earls of Mar had many other residences as well. The Countess of Mar was a famous Protestant and Covenanter. Her father, Esmé Stewart, Duke of Lennox, was a French Roman Catholic and favourite of James VI, and she was brought up a Roman Catholic. She was converted about 1609 and became a zealous supporter of Presbyterianism. She died in 1644, and "Old Lady Mar" is often mentioned in Covenanting accounts of the period. The house was damaged in the 1745 rebellion and abandoned thereafter.

4. Church of the Holy Rude. Next to Mar's Wark is the parish church of Stirling, known as the Church of the Holy Rude ("rude" or "rood" is an old word for "cross"). The present church was built in 1500. The coronation of James VI took place here in 1567, when he was aged 13 months, with John Knox as the preacher.

The first Protestant minister, from 1560, was John Duncanson, who died in 1601 aged about 100. Before that, Duncanson had been an Augustinian canon at the cathedral of St Andrews. He had probably had Protestant sympathies for a considerable time before the Reformation. Another famous minister was Patrick Simson (died 1618) who was used in the conversion of Lady Mar, and who wrote books on early Church History.

Perhaps the most famous minister of all was the martyr, James Guthrie. In Guthrie's day, the Scottish Church was split into two parties called the Resolutioners and the Protestors, and the division became so bad that the two parties held separate services. In Stirling, the town council resolved the difficulty by putting a wall across the middle of the church. Guthrie was a Protestor, and he had the east end of the church (away from the main door). The dividing wall was not removed until 1935. Guthrie was executed as a Covenanter in Edinburgh in 1661, and his head was put on the Netherbow in Edinburgh. It was finally removed in 1689 by a student Alexander Hamilton, who himself later became one of the ministers in the Church of the Holy Rude.

Another famous minister here was Ebenezer Erskine, from 1731 to about 1738. An important later minister was "Black" John Russell, who was mentioned in a well-known poem by Robert Burns.

5. The Valley cemetery. The Valley cemetery was laid out in the 1850s because the Holy Rude kirkyard had become so overcrowded with graves. The Presbyterian statues and the Pyramid (dedicated to all those who suffered

martyrdom in the cause of civil and religious liberty in Scotland) were paid for by a wealthy local man, William Drummond. Drummond's brother Peter had the well-known "Stirling Tract Society", while his son Henry was a famous evangelist and author (but not the soundest man in doctrine). The statues of John Knox, Andrew Melville, Alexander Henderson, James Guthrie, James Renwick, and Ebenezer Erskine – plus a glass-covered monument to commemorate the Wigtown Covenanters, Margaret and Agnes Wilson – were all designed by the sculptor Alexander Handyside Ritchie (1858).

6. *Ebenezer Erskine's church.* Ebenezer Erskine was one of the ministers in the Church of the Holy Rude. In 1732, he preached a sermon against the practice, which was coming into the Church of Scotland, of ministers being chosen by patrons (usually landowners) rather than by the people. He was disciplined for this, and in 1733 he and three other ministers – James Fisher, Alexander Moncrieff and Gabriel Wilson – seceded from the Church of Scotland and formed their own Presbytery, which became the Secession Church. Erskine was one of the greatest preachers of his day and a large congregation followed him. A church was built here in 1738. It was replaced in 1825, and just the façade of this second church remains. Erskine died in 1754 and was buried here, but the large monument to Erskine dates from 1859. His original gravestone is said to be underneath.

7. *The Mercat Cross.* (Not part of the original tour.) Just down Broad Street is the Mercat Cross which was taken down in 1792 but re-erected in 1891. It was here that James Hamilton, Archbishop of St Andrews, was hanged in 1571 for his part in the assassination of Regent Moray. Moray had been shot in Linlithgow by a man concealed in the Archbishop's house there. Hamilton had been Archbishop since 1547 but had never conformed to Protestantism at the Reformation.

8. *Cambuskenneth Abbey.* Cambuskenneth Abbey was an Augustinian abbey, of which there were several in Scotland, including St Andrews (the buildings near the cathedral) and Holyrood Abbey in Edinburgh. The Augustinians were nearer to Protestantism than some other Romanists, and quite a number of Augustinian canons, especially from St Andrews, became Protestant ministers, including Alexander Alesius, John Winram, and John Duncanson, who was mentioned above. The Protestant martyr Thomas Forret, who was burnt to death in 1540 in Edinburgh, was an Augustinian canon from Inchcolm. Four of the canons from Cambuskenneth, Robert and James Richardson, Thomas Cocklaw and Robert Logie, belonged to the same Protestant circle as Forret and fled to England in 1538 and 1539. There were 19 of these canons in 1559, of whom four became ministers or readers in the reformed Church of Scotland.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2023-24

UK Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Aberdeen:* Julia Macleod. *Barnoldswick:* Bethan Middleton. *Dingwall:* Catherine Campbell. *Edinburgh:* Fraser Campbell. *Inverness:* Jenna Campbell. *London:* Sarah Munns. *Llanelli:* Carys Cran. *North Tolsta:* Uilleam Morrison.

Intermediate Section: *Barnoldswick:* Sam van Essen. *Dingwall:* D A MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Anna Cameron-Macintosh, Beth Dickie. *Glasgow:* Violet Marr. *Inverness:* Susanna Jane Campbell, Murray Dickie, Anna McSeveney, James Maton. *Llanelli:* Carwyn Cran.

Junior Section: *Aberdeen:* Kenneth Macleod, Cassia Soni. *Barnoldswick:* Alexia van Essen, Susie Middleton. *Beaulay:* Rebekka Fraser, Hudson Maclean. *Dingwall:* Neil Campbell, Iain MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Alec Cameron-Macintosh, Darcy Esson, Alice Hicklin. *Glasgow:* Evan Marr. *Halkirk:* Angus Hymers-Mackintosh. *Inverness:* Campbell Dickie. *London:* Ernest Campbell, Andrew Macleod. *North Tolsta:* Rebecca Morrison. *North Uist:* Katie M Macdonald.

Upper Primary Section. *Dingwall:* Heather Campbell, Mairi MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Julia Cameron-Mackintosh, Anderson Dickie, Joella Esson, Leah Hicklin. *Glasgow:* Joel Marr. *North Harris:* Finlay Jardine. *North Tolsta:* James Morrison. *Portree:* Murdo Macraill.

Lower Primary Section: *Aberdeen:* Kate Macleod. *Dingwall:* Charlotte MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Samuel and James Dickie, Teddy and Jessica Esson, Matthew Hicklin, Genevieve MacLean. *Glasgow:* Magnus and Archie van Kralingen. *Inverness:* Molly, Emily and Alfie Campbell, Harvey and Rose Dickie. *London:* Lydia and William Campbell, Peter Macleod. *North Harris:* Margaret and George Jardine. *Staffin:* Grace Campbell. *Stornoway:* Murdo Maclean.

Overseas Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Peter Campbell, Aaron and Amelia Smith. *Calgary:* Kharis and Khloe Chang. *Chesley:* Isabel Bouman, Kara Zekveld. *Gisborne:* Timothy Newton. *Grafton:* Levi Kidd.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Joseph Campbell. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn and Shona Hembd. *Münster:* Clara Rösner.

Junior Section: *Auckland:* Keith Smith. *Calgary:* Karsten Chang. *Chesley:* Daniel Kuiper, Angela Tuinier. *Gisborne:* Preston Hembd, James Newton. *Grafton:* Harrison Kidd. *Maine:* Kayla Crum. *Sydney:* Ethan Macdonald. *Wentworthville:* Sarah Steel.

Upper Primary Section: *Auckland:* Marion Campbell. *Carterton:* Lana de Boer. *Chesley:* Matthew Kuiper, Meleah Tuinier. *Edmonton:* John Mun. *Fountain Inn:* Tala-Linn Kerr. *Gisborne:* Ashley Hembd. *Maine:* Leah Crum. *Münster:* Conrad Rösner. *Sydney:* Abigail and Lachlan Macdonald. *Wentworthville:* David Steel.

Lower Primary Section: *Auckland:* David Campbell, Daniel Smith. *Calafell:* Valentina Nayach van Essen. *Carterton:* Mila de Boer. *Chesley:* James and Nathan Kuiper. *Edmonton:* Anna and Isaiah Mun. *Fountain Inn:* Catherine Kerr. *Gisborne:* Andrew Hembd. *Sydney:* Jackson Campbell, Oliver Campbell, Hugh and James Macdonald. *Wentworthville:* Emily and Lachlan Steel. *Westkapelle:* Jacob Brasser.

Looking Around Us

Behaviour in Schools

Once again, reports of violence against teachers in Scottish schools have been appearing in the news. One would hope that no one reading this article is guilty of violence against teachers, and that everyone in school would make

every effort to be obedient. Paul writes to the Romans: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”. Everyone is to obey those who administer the laws of the country, unless these laws are against the teachings of the Bible. God’s laws are more important than human laws. In the same way, pupils are to obey their teachers while they are in school; they have authority over pupils. Again, God’s laws are more important than a teacher’s instructions.

One piece of analysis shows that there has been a “general worsening of pupil behaviour since 2016” and that school staff are experiencing rises in seriously disruptive behaviour. So why is there so much disobedience in schools? The first answer is that schools reflect society in general. There is a great deal of rejection of authority everywhere. Too often parents do not demand obedience, and so children and young people too often have not learned to respect authority in school and in society.

All proper authority comes from God Himself. But what proportion of society believe that God really exists? Especially, what proportion of society believe that God has revealed Himself, in the Bible? The answer is that very few people, and very few families, take God seriously when He speaks in the Bible, giving real authority to His commandments and every other part of His teachings. How good it would be if most families throughout Britain and other countries would gather every morning and evening to worship God – to read the Bible, sing from a psalm and pray!

People generally have lost their sense of God’s authority, but we can hardly expect things to be different when most people do not believe that God is their Creator but assume that human beings as well as everything else came into existence through evolution. A random series of changes leading to the existence of human beings cannot lead to people having a proper sense of authority. And schools themselves have thrown away a proper basis for authority in society and in education by promoting evolution and turning away from the Bible.

Someone speaking for the Scottish Government has said that recent changes in behaviour in schools are well understood. But are the changes that lie behind the worsening of conditions in the classroom understood? Almost certainly not. The fact is that rejection of God and His Word are widespread throughout Government as well as throughout society in general.

How much Scotland and other countries need the gospel to be spread everywhere and the Holy Spirit to be poured out wherever the gospel is preached and the Word of God is read! How much we need to pray!

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