

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Cover picture: Cattle at Northton, Issle of Harris.

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Volume 89

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What Wisdom Tells Us

“**W**isdom”, we are told in the Bible, “is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it” (Proverbs 8:11). In other words, Wisdom is better than everything else in the world, or even anything that one might wish to have.

But this chapter in Proverbs is one that contains, from beginning to end, the words of someone speaking who calls himself Wisdom. He is not merely a human being; He is an eternal Person. Who is He? He says, “When [God] prepared the heavens, I was there . . . when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him” (verses 27-30). He was involved in the Creation; and He must have existed before the Creation began. But He had no beginning; He always existed; He was eternal. This Person could only be the eternal Son of God.

Yet He was to take a human nature into union with Himself. He adds, “I was daily His [God the Father’s] delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men” (verses 30-31). He is speaking of the work that He was to do when He would come into the world “to save sinners” – among the sons of men. He was rejoicing in the sinners that He was to come and save. In wisdom – in perfect wisdom – He was from all eternity rejoicing in the perfect nature of that work; there was no streak of foolishness in any part of it.

The Son of God speaks to every generation in wisdom. We know Him as Jesus, and He speaks to us in wisdom. And the Bible speaks of God the Father telling the disciples about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matthew 17:5). Not only the disciples are told this; it is spoken to everyone in every generation, including this one, who reads the Bible.

We are told to listen to Christ when, for instance, He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He is telling us to believe on Him, to trust in Him, no matter how

weary or heavy laden we may be because of sin, or because of any other trouble or sadness or weariness that we may experience in this life. And, if we believe on Christ, He promises to deliver us from it all. He may not give us complete rest at once, but if we have believed in Him, He will give us that complete deliverance from sin and guilt and trouble when He brings us to everlasting rest in heaven.

Long ago, there was a poor man who could not read. He was a cobbler, earning his living by mending old shoes. One day, a minister asked him how he knew that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The cobbler believed that Jesus is the Son of God; the minister, sadly, did not.

The cobbler answered, "You know, when I first became concerned about my soul, and unhappy on account of my sins, I called on you to ask for your advice".

What was the minister's answer? He told the cobbler to get into the company of other people and spend his time in as merry a way as he could. In other words, he was telling the cobbler not to spend his time thinking seriously about his sins; he was to forget about them. The minister emphasised to the cobbler that he must not go to hear ministers who believed that the Bible is true and that sinners are saved through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (He called them *Methodists* as a nickname.)

The cobbler was to learn that a minister who does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God cannot give wise advice about finding salvation from sin. Such a minister does not know the way of salvation himself.

The minister agreed that he had given that advice. But it was dangerous; it was likely to keep the cobbler on the broad way that leads to eternal destruction. Yet though he was not able to read the Bible, he was able to learn its teachings from the preaching of the "Methodist" ministers.

"I followed your advice for some time," the cobbler answered, "but the more I trifled the more my misery increased. And at last I was persuaded to hear one of those 'Methodist' ministers who came into our neighbourhood and preached Jesus Christ as the Saviour. In the greatest agony of my mind, I prayed to Him to save me and to forgive my sins. And now I feel that He has clearly forgiven them."

The cobbler then followed this up with the last part of his answer to the minister's question: "By this I know that He is the Son of God". It is only the Son of God who can save sinners. So people, for instance, who go about calling themselves Jehovah's Witnesses, but denying the truth about Jehovah as the Son of God, are not to be believed.

It is because Jesus is the Son of God that we can pray to Him and that He can hear us when we pray, no matter where we may be in the world. And it

is because Jesus is the Son of God that He is able to take away our sins, no matter how many and great these may be.

See how wisely Jesus spoke to the Woman of Samaria at the well at Sychar. He, as Wisdom, led her on step by step in their conversation, until she spoke about the coming *Messiah*, a word which means the same as Christ, the Anointed One – the Saviour who had been promised to the people of God in the Old Testament.

He told her: “I that speak unto thee am He”. He was revealing to her that He was Himself the Messiah, and she believed on Him. At that very moment Jesus, the Son of God, saved her from all her sins. The Woman had come to another and a better well than the one she came to for water day by day. Jesus had told her: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”.

When we take a drink of cold water from a well or from a tap, we soon become thirsty again and need to come back for more, but when Jesus gives someone a drink from the well of salvation, it is a permanent blessing. Those who believe will never lose their salvation.

Jesus was pouring out wisdom to the Woman of Samaria. He was showing her what is important in life: to listen to the wisdom that He pours out, especially as to how a sinner can be saved. We too are to come to the well where Jesus is – not the one at Sychar, but the well of living water where Jesus is to be found, the well from which we may receive the blessings of everlasting life.

To come to Jesus – to believe in Him – is wisdom. To stay away from Him – to continue in unbelief – is complete foolishness. We must be earnest about these things; we must not delay. We need to be saved before we die. Indeed what a blessing it is to have our sins forgiven and to live the rest of our lives here to the glory of God!

No wonder the Son of God tells us that “wisdom is better than rubies”! It is better than anything else we can have in this world. What we have in this world is only for a short time. If we find true wisdom, the wisdom that Jesus gives – if we receive water from the well of salvation – we will truly have permanent blessings. And that is far, far better than the best of things, things that are only for this life.

Remember that we also read in the Book of Proverbs: “Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not . . . Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (4:5,7). How earnest we should be to obtain permanent blessings for our souls!

A Slave Taught by God

This article is adapted from one originally written by Ambrose Serle and reprinted in *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* for April 1939. The article is not printed here to justify slavery; to take away someone's freedom is totally wrong. It is meant to show some of the effects of God's grace in a person's soul. Serle was a godly Englishman who died in 1812. He represented the UK Government during the American War of Independence and also worked for the Government in London.

What I see every day convinces me that the children of God are made so by His own special grace and power. He can use everything whenever it pleases Him to convert a sinner. In one of my walks, while I was in the state of New York, I was looking at what was growing around me and comparing it with that of my own country.

I came near a middle-aged black who was tilling the ground. I felt a strong wish, unusual with me, to speak with him. I asked him some questions about his work, which he answered very sensibly. I wished him to tell me whether his state of slavery was disagreeable to him, and would he not gladly exchange it for freedom?

"Sir," said he looking seriously on me, "I have a wife and children. My master takes care of them, and I have no worry about providing anything. I have a good master, who teaches me to read; and I read a good book, and it makes me happy."

"I am glad", I replied, "to hear you say so. And what is the good book you read?"

"The Bible, sir, God's own good Book."

"Do you understand this Book, friend, as well as read it? For many read the words well, who cannot get hold of the true and good sense."

"O sir," he said, "I read the book much before I understood; but at last I felt pain in my heart. I found things in the book that cut me to pieces."

"Yes, I said," and what things were they?"

"Why, sir, I found that I had a bad heart, a very bad heart indeed. I felt pain that God would destroy me, because I was wicked, and did nothing as I should do. God was so holy, and I was very vile and naughty; so I could have nothing from Him but fire and brimstone in hell."

I asked him what ministry or means he made use of and found that his master was a Quaker. [Quakers began about 1650; they were never very scriptural, but they have drifted very far from the Bible since they began.] He is a plain sort of man, who taught his slaves to read. But he had not spoken with his slave about the state of his soul. I then asked him how he got comfort under all his trial about his soul.

“O sir, it was Christ that gave me comfort by His dear word. He called me to come to Him, and He would give me rest, for I was very weary and heavy laden.” And here he went through some of the most precious texts in the Bible, showing me, by his simple comments on them as he went along, what great things God had done in the course of some years for his soul.

I then asked him several questions about the merit of works, the justification of a sinner, the power of grace, and the like. I confess I was as much astonished at, and admired, the sweet spirit and simplicity of his answers, with the heavenly wisdom that God had put into the mind of this slave. His words just flowed from the riches of God’s grace; they perfectly charmed me with their simple tenderness and with how well-expressed they were.

On the other hand, I entered into all his feelings, as I told him what he had never heard before – that the Lord in His mercy dealt in this way with all His children, and had so dealt with me. This drew streams of joyous tears down his face, and we looked at each other, and talked with that Christian love that cannot be described and made me more than ever believe – what I have often too thoughtlessly professed to believe – the communion of saints

I shall never forget how this excellent man seemed to hang on my lips and to drink in my very words, when I spoke further about the love of Christ to poor sinners, the tender mercy of God, the delightful sense He often gives of His presence, the faith He gives in His promises. I spoke too about the victories this faith is given so that it gets over trials and temptations, the joy and peace in believing, the hope in life and death, and how it gloriously expects endless life.

He had never heard such conversation nor had the opportunity of hearing it before. He seemed like a man who had been thrown into a new world and at last had found company. Though my conversation lasted at least two or three hours, I scarcely ever had felt time pass so pleasantly in all my life.

We did not know how to part. He wanted to go with me as far as he was allowed. On my part, I felt such a delight in the simple, enjoyable, solid, sincere experience of this dear soul, that I could have been glad to see him often there, or to see his like at any time now. But my work made this impossible.

So I took a loving goodbye, with an earnestness that would have flowed from the warmest and the longest friendship. I told him that neither the colour of his skin nor his present situation could prevent him from being my dear brother in our dear Saviour. And I said that, though we must part now, never to see each other any more in this world, I had no doubt that we would have another joyful meeting in our Father’s home, where we should live together and love one another throughout a long and happy eternity.

“Amen, amen, my dear sir,” he answered; “God bless you, and poor me too, for ever and ever.” If I had been an angel from heaven, he could not have received me with more evident delight than he did; nor could I have considered him with a more sympathetic regard if he had been a long-known Christian of the good old sort, grown up into my affections in the course of many years.

Happy world, if all were Christians, if they showed more of this brotherly love to each other in the world! No one can deny that it ought to be so. O that everyone, who believes he is a true Christian, would pray for faith and love, to seek brotherly love for all other Christians!

Blessed Lord, Fountain of life and love, send forth the Spirit of Thy Son into my heart, and into the hearts of all my brethren so that we may first love Thee above all things, and then love each other with a pure heart fervently. Subdue hatred and all the separating corruptions of our fallen nature, and let us consider ourselves as brethren, fellow heirs of the grace of life, people who shall pass eternity together; yes, as parts of each other and members, Holy Jesus, of Thy body, flesh and bones. Even so let it be, for Thy glory and for our present and eternal comfort through Thy grace. Amen.

Mrs Bowden and Her Family

John Ashworth

A chapter shortened from John Ashworth's *Life and Strange Tales*

Mrs Bowden no longer had any little children; they were all grown up by the time her husband died. But one day, the oldest of her daughter's five children, who was only seven, said, “Mother, since my father died, I have often seen you go upstairs with a sad face, which makes me feel poorly. But when you come down again, your face shines: what do you do to your face, Mother?”

The girl did not then understand that her mother went upstairs to pray, to spread her trouble before Him who knows all sorrow, can help in time of need, and make His children happy in every affliction.

Mrs Bowden was not like her praying daughter in her religious feelings. She sometimes went to church, but she more often spent her Sabbaths in dusting, polishing, cooking, eating and sleeping, probably caring more to have a bright fender than for the house of God or the salvation of her soul. So her Sabbaths – instead of being hours of peace, holiness and joy – were mostly days of weariness.

After her husband's death, she began to be more thoughtful; she saw how

solemn it was to die and knew that, if *she* had died, she was not prepared for death. She attended some place of worship more regularly; light entered her dark mind, and in mercy she became convinced that she was a sinner.

A more important struggle now began than anything else that can engage the human soul. She knew that she had wasted years of priceless value, sinned against God, grieved His Holy Spirit, and that His frown was upon her. What was she to do? Many in this state of mind quench the striving of the Spirit and flee to theatres, concerts, novels and drink. "God be merciful to me a sinner", is the prayer they seem determined never to offer up.

What a mercy this carelessness did not continue in Mrs Bowden's case! She felt her burden grow heavier and heavier. At last, she was bathed in tears of repentance, and a still, small voice whispered, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace!" Then she felt: how precious Christ is to those that believe. Joy filled her soul with praise and thanksgiving. She spoke about it to her neighbours and told all her fellow-worshippers at the chapel.

Mary, another daughter of Mrs Bowden, went to Lancashire to become a servant, and family worship was held in her new home. One morning, the father of the family, while praying for the salvation of the whole household, mentioned several of them by name, among them of the new servant. A few days later, the servant asked to speak to the mistress on her own, and told her how unhappy she was,

"Are you not satisfied with your place?" the mistress asked.

"O yes, I am well pleased with my situation, but I wish to tell you that I have been concerned about my soul ever since my master prayed for my salvation. The prayer sunk deep into my heart, and I want to know what I must do to be saved."

"Mary, I am so glad you have told me; now sit down, and we will read and talk and pray about your sorrow, for I hope it will soon be turned into joy." For several hours, during the next days, the good lady explained the Scriptures, especially John 3, and pleaded with God for her. Then came the great change, and Mary and her mistress rejoiced together.

About three months later, Mary asked permission to go to visit her mother; a letter had come telling her that her mother was not well. After Mary reached home, she asked her mother before going to bed if she might read a psalm.

"Yes, child, if you wish," was the answer.

Mary read Psalm 91 and said, after a pause, "Mother, may I pray with you?"

"Yes; but can you pray without a book, child?"

"Praying is telling God what we want, with humility and truth, Mother."

Mary knelt down and, after thanking God for her own salvation, prayed earnestly for the salvation of her mother – so earnestly that her mother was

very much astonished. During the next day, her mother asked Mary many times to read and pray with her. She felt herself a poor sinner and sought a Saviour; and before Mary returned to work, she had the unspeakable joy of hearing her mother say that she had found Jesus.

The same day, an important man in the church called to see her; the moment he entered, she said, "I am glad you have called, please sit down, for I must tell you we have both been wrong, we may have forgiveness of sin and peace through believing. I know we may, for through the shed blood of Christ, I now enjoy it. What a mercy! What a mercy!"

The man rose up, walked towards the window, looked out and began to whistle. Then turning to Mary, he said, "Young woman, I think your mother is not so well today, she is evidently rambling. Good morning."

"Rambling!" replied the mother, with a smile; "rambling! I wish I had rambled 30 years ago."

No one seemed to enjoy the services more than Mrs Bowden. But she had one great anxiety: not all her family were saved. That they all might find the Saviour she had found was her earnest, constant prayer. To have a husband or a wife, a brother or a sister, walking on to eternal death, heedless of all persuasion, is an unspeakable trouble. I recently saw three sisters weeping over their wayward brother, not because he had disgraced himself or them by any open sin or breach of God's law, but because he turned a deaf ear to heaven's warnings, and walked in the way of the ungodly. They feared for his never-dying soul. This was Mrs. Bowden's case.

One of her sons sat at the fire, ill with TB, coughing himself into the grave, and her anxiety grew stronger every day. He had a strange temper; he was very impatient in his illness; nothing seemed to impress him. This distressed her very much. She tried all means to do him good in body and soul, but received few thanks and little encouragement. She was glad when anyone called to see him: his sickness was long, and he required much attention. This affected her health, but she often said, "I will nurse him and do all I can for him, to the last moment, but I cannot bear to think of him being lost for ever; the thought of this very near kills me. If his soul was saved, how I should rejoice."

The last time she attended the chapel she was suffering from a severe cold, and it became much worse. It was the day when a new church was to be opened and I was to take one of the opening services. A terrible hurricane swept across the country which demolished much of the church, and over 30 were injured, yet no one was killed. But many were said to be dead, and I among them. So the people belonging to our chapel were in great trouble, and though the storm still raged, they came to the evening service. But though

I had not received the slightest injury, I was too upset to conduct the service. Mrs Bowden could not be persuaded to stay at home. She pushed through the storm, and rejoiced that her pastor's life was saved.

When James, her son who was ill, saw his mother's health fail, it softened him to some extent; but it was long before he showed signs of repentance towards God. When people, either in sickness or health, persistently refuse to be reconciled to their Maker, it is a proof of the grossest ignorance, or downright wickedness. "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life", mainly applies to wickedness, but I think it was ignorance in James's case, I found patience was needed in speaking to him, and he had to be taught even the basics of God's plan of saving sinners to him.

The time came when neither of them could get up from bed, and it became a question which of them would die first. Another son had long provided for all their needs, proving again that true religion leads us to honour our parents. When this good son heard of his mother's dangerous illness, he brought his family to see her. One of the children, about four, after looking a long time silently in her face, said, "Grandmother, pray to Jesus, He can make you well again".

This sentence from the little grandchild made the dying saint very happy. The name of Jesus had been precious to her for five years, and that name spoken by her grandchild was a joy indeed. As soon as she could speak, she said, "I know Jesus can make me well, dear, but I am going to where I shall see Him, and then I shall be poorly no more."

Some spoke of hearing Mrs Bowden, in her last hours, telling of her glorious prospects beyond death. When her head was raised a little, she could see her son in the other bed, who like herself, was close to death. Her prayers for him often greatly moved him; and when she heard him pray for himself, tears of joy would stream down her pale face.

I felt it solemn to kneel between the two beds, both mother and son on the borders of eternity. What a mercy the mother had some hope for the son!

God's Providence

There was a man living in Frankfurt, in Germany, who had a lot of money but was "not rich toward God"; he had no inward spiritual blessings. How different he was from people like Abraham and Sarah; Joseph, David, Paul and Timothy; and Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany.

This man had been several times shipwrecked but his heart was still unchanged; he did not acknowledge that it was God who had preserved him;

he had not submitted to the authority of God, who is ruling over everyone. He did not praise “the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works”, and he absolutely refused to talk about spiritual subjects or to have a visit from a minister of the gospel.

But he was not happy. The things of the world could not satisfy his soul, although he had plenty of these things. And there were times when he felt restless, conscious of needing something he did not have. In this state of mind one evening, he got out his Bible and began to read it.

Some verses caught his attention and would not go away. But he could not understand the passage and he asked himself: “Who can explain it to me? I do not know any of the pastors in the city and so I cannot go to any of them for an explanation.” Yet he still wished to understand the passage.

He then thought of a certain noted minister, but said to himself: “He does not know me; how can I reach him for an explanation?”

Just then his door bell rang, and he went to open the door. Standing in front of him was the very minister he had thought of. He cried out, “Heaven sends you to me. Come in; come in.”

The minister went in, but he was very surprised, because he did not know the man. So the minister asked the man why he spoke like this.

He replied, “I was just thinking that if I could see you, you could explain this part of Scripture to me”.

The minister gave him the explanation he asked for. He then made use of his opportunity to set before the man the things which belonged to his peace. He pointed him to Jesus as “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The minister’s teaching was applied to his soul by the Holy Spirit. He received the truth, trusted in Christ and became a man of prayer, a sincere Christian.

But as the two men did not know each other, what made the minister come to the house? In fact, he meant to call on a friend in the same street, whose house he knew perfectly well. But not looking carefully where he was going, he went to the wrong door. That mistake led him just where he was needed; it led to the salvation of a soul.

Many people would say that it was just an accident. In fact, it was part of the providence of God. And what is that? *The Shorter Catechism* tells us: “God’s works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions” (Answer 11). So providence is God keeping in existence all that He has created, and ruling over everything they do. And all God’s works of providence are most holy, wise and powerful.

God was in control of the wealthy man when he picked up his Bible and began to read it, when his attention was attracted to the group of verses,

when he wanted them explained and when he believed on the Saviour. And God was in control of the minister when he went to the wrong door; it was no accident; it was God's kind providence – to bring the man to learn about the way of salvation and cause him to walk in it. Ask God to order all that happens to you in His providence, for the good of your soul especially.

For Junior Readers

Naaman the Leper (3)

We find the story of Naaman in 2 Kings chapter 5 – a story I hope you know well. There was a maid in his house who had been carried away as a captive from Israel. She told about the prophet Elisha, who was able to heal Naaman of his leprosy. When Naaman came to Israel, Elisha just sent a message to Naaman, telling him to go to wash in the River Jordan. Naaman was not pleased, and his servants had to persuade him to do what the prophet told him. This is the last article about Naaman.

Longing for his recovery, Naaman's servants dared to approach their enraged master over this matter. Surely, they said, if the prophet had demanded some great deed, he would have done it. Why not then just do the simple action of washing? In God's mercy, Naaman was persuaded.

There are false religions in this world which require "some great thing" – visits to special places, payments of money – all completely opposed to the freeness of the gospel. We only need be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Wash and be clean. Repent and believe the gospel. Believe and be saved.

Again, the words of 1 Corinthians spring to mind: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Naaman went into the Jordan the seventh time as leprous as he had left Syria. He came out, completely and perfectly and obviously cured. Imagine his relief, his joy! There was nothing special about the waters of that river. The actual waters had not washed away his illness. No water could do that. The miracle had been done by the power of Elisha's God when Naaman submitted himself to God's authority. "Let God be God," as a minister once said, "and you just live as His creature". Obedience to the command, "Wash and be clean", was the way to healing.

The leprosy was gone. But Naaman had been changed in another way too.

He did not think that Elisha the prophet had been responsible for his cure but Elisha's God. He gave up the false gods of Syria. He said, "I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel".

He then tried to give Elisha the gifts he had brought. But his cure was priceless – no money could buy it. Yet he wanted to show his gratitude by giving something back. Elisha had no desire for these gifts, though he doubtless could have found many good uses for them. He knew it would be better for Naaman to see that a prophet of the one true God did not value worldly wealth. Naaman was at fault when he looked for pardon for his future sins when he would bow down to an idol. But Elisha dealt with him gently.

The chapter turns from the Syrian to a never-changed Israelite. Godly Elisha had a very ungodly servant working for him, strange though it may seem. The love of money seems to have driven Gehazi to act as he did. In that, he is like Judas Iscariot. Determined to get for himself the gifts which Elisha had refused, Gehazi followed the departing Syrians and lied to Naaman. He had no care for Elisha's reputation. He had no concern that he might ruin the view Naaman had of the true religion through Elisha.

He considered rather that his master had been foolish not to take the riches offered by this foreign army leader who owed his health and life to the prophet! Gehazi invented a story, stole the gifts, hid them and then lied to Elisha in order to cover his sin. Lying always, always breeds more lies.

How little, it seems, Gehazi knew about the God of Elisha. We might wonder why he did not think the Lord would somehow tell Elisha all. Be sure your sins will find you out. Achan and his buried treasure, in Joshua's time, were told to all Israel. And Gehazi's stolen gifts were surely made known to the man of God.

Gehazi was punished at once. His punishment came at once; it was suitable yet terrible. God, who had healed Naaman's disease, could just as easily pass it on to Gehazi. "Thou God seest me", said Hagar so long ago. And He does. Even all our thoughts are known to Him, Psalm 139 tells us. How easily we imagine God to be like a man or a woman who just might not notice what we do, say or think. He is a God who sees all things, to whom we owe full obedience, against whom we constantly sin. But this is not the God we naturally want to believe in.

And the way of salvation which He has revealed to us in His Word is not the kind of salvation we naturally want to be saved by. But God – God in His rich and infinite mercy – can so touch a heart that it flees from all empty hopes and rests on His promise alone.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

C Esson

For Younger Readers

The Girl who Ran Away

“**Y**ou’re the unkindest, crassest mother and father anyone ever had! I don’t love you one bit, and I wish I could go away and find a new home and another Mummy and Daddy!”

“Very well, Joan.”

It was Daddy who spoke, and his voice sounded very stern and cold – so cold that it sent a little shiver down Joan’s back.

“Very well, you had better go and see if you can find some other people who will look after you and love you better than Mummy and I. There is nothing to stop you if you want to.”

Joan looked at him, half afraid he might be serious. Daddy’s eyes were as stern and cold as his voice. He had taken her at her word, and was truly telling her to leave home.

At first, she felt even crosser; she ran upstairs, pulled on her coat, and, with angry tears running down her face, went out of the house and down the long drive. Then she had time to think. Where could she go? She had no money. Who would want a little girl like her? Who would look after her as well as her own Mummy and Daddy. No one. No one at all could possibly love her as they had done. She would never, she knew, find anyone she would love as much as they did. Poor Joan! As she walked on down the drive, her steps began to drag, and her tears were no longer angry ones, but sad ones. How she wished she had never said such a dreadful thing to her Daddy!

The long drive came to an end at last, and Joan found herself on the road. By now she was utterly unhappy. And sitting down on the grass at the side of the road, she sobbed and sobbed and sobbed.

She thought that she was all alone, that no one knew, that no one cared what happened to her. She did not know that Daddy had been watching her all the time, and that he had followed her all the way down the long drive. All she knew was that suddenly she was lifted up in two strong arms, and Daddy held her safe and sound! When she stopped crying, she stole a look at his face; the coldness had gone, and he looked loving and kind once more.

“Daddy, I’m sorry. Will you forgive me, and let me be your own little girl again?”

Daddy kissed her.

"Of course!" he said. "I couldn't do without you any more than you could without me. But you know, Joan, there are some people who think they can live without God. They run away from Him because they think He is stern and unkind. But all the time He loves His people far, far better than anyone else could love them, and is only stern with them to help them. And He watches over them however much they run away, and brings His redeemed children back to the shelter of His arms. Joan, dear." And his voice was very serious: "Don't ever try to run away from God, will you?"

"O no, Daddy, I won't", said Joan. By K V M Collins in *Cheering Words*

The Power of the Cross

C H Spurgeon

Taken with editing from *The Christian Treasury* for 1857. First Spurgeon looks back to a time in the 1500s when people were burnt for believing the Bible.

A martyr is going to the stake; the guards are around him; the crowds are mocking; but he is marching steadily on. See, they bind him to the stake, with a chain around his middle; they heap bundles of sticks all about him; the flames are lit. Listen to his words: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name". The flames are kindling around his limbs; the fire is burning him even to the bone; see him lift up his hands and say, "I know that my redeemer liveth" and, though the fire devour "this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God". See him clutch the stake and kiss it, as if he loved it; and hear him say, For every chain of iron that man girds me with, God shall give me a chain of gold; for all these bundles of wood and this shame, He shall increase the weight of my eternal glory.

See, all the under parts of his body are consumed; still he lives in that torture; at last he bows down, and the upper part of his body falls over; and as he falls you hear him say, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit". What wonderful strength was on him? What made that man strong? What helped him to bear that cruelty? What made him stand unmoved in the flames? It was a thing of power; it was the cross of Jesus crucified. For "unto us which are saved it is the power of God".

But see another and very different scene. There is no crowd there; it is a silent room. There is a poor mattress, a lonely bed, a doctor standing by. There is a young girl; her face is made white with TB. Though sometimes

her face flushed, it was the death-flush of her disease. There she lies, weak, pale, worn, dying; yet see a smile on her face as if she had seen an angel. She speaks, and there is music in her voice. Joan of Arc, the French heroine, was not half so mighty as that girl. She is wrestling with difficulties on her deathbed, but see her calmness and hear her dying verse:

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is high,
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide.
O receive my soul at last.

C H Spurgeon

A Letter from World War 2

Rev Alexander McPherson

This letter was first printed in February 1973 issue of this *Magazine*, when Mr McPherson was editor. He was one of the "small group" he refers to and he printed the letter under the heading, "The Editor's Page". There is now some editing.

This month I am going to let an old friend fill my page for me. We belonged to a small group who met weekly to pray, and when the war broke out and scattered us, he undertook the brotherly task of communicating with us by means of a monthly newsletter. These letters were designed to bring a breath of home and of the gospel of peace to those in the thick of war. How pleasant it was for exiles to read words of Christian encouragement in places where nothing of that was to be heard from men, but only from the pages of God's Word and on the inner ear at the throne of grace! What you are now going to read is a personal message forming part of the letter of September 1942.

Dear Friend, it is now five years since it pleased God to bring us together in a way which has been profitable from a spiritual aspect, and not without certain happy compensations to our journey through the world. Banishing all natural pride and satisfaction, we can rejoice that our prayer meeting is something that has remained unchanged in principle, and to which we have been enabled to look with continued interest. It is not difficult to remember how we occupied our various chairs with a regularity befitting the honour of Him in whose name we sought to meet.

It is a far cry from those chairs to where you are now, and it is strange that so many miles and so many waters should lie between us. But, blessed be

His name that our fellowship in the Lord is not lessened by our enforced separation. It has also pleased God to maintain this little gathering by keeping one or two of us at home, and this weak effort of a regular letter to you who are scattered abroad may be the means in His hands of maintaining the fragrance of that fellowship.

We do not think any of us will inquire, Is it really five years? The years stand out very clearly, long weary years, full of the unexpected, questionings, fears and doubts, and sorrow too. We first met together in September 1937, a month which began a year of suspense which ended with the synthetic peace agreement of Munich in September 1938.

The second year was marked by the supposedly all-out race to obtain the munitions of war, and during it the laws of God, particularly the Sabbath commandment, were brushed aside in order to gain the goal. This unhappy year ended in the declaration of war against Germany. Thus September 1939 opened the tragic years of war, three of which have dragged themselves from time, leaving behind cities of desolation, homes without inhabitants, and inhabitants without homes. Thousands upon thousands have gone by the door of violence and bloodshed to eternity, and few lay it to heart.

Yet there are many things for which we lift up our hearts in gratitude to the Giver of all good. One of these is that our meeting was strictly motivated by the desire for prayer and the reading of the Word of God. We are glad to say, and should this note fall into more public hands, we are glad to affirm that we have never at any time used our privilege for any private discussion of any matter, and in particular, any matter relative to church divisions. On the other hand we can look back on some very interesting conversations and hours of happy fellowship. You are now very far away in person, dear friends, and our hearts go out to you in the love of the gospel of Christ. We hope that in your quiet hours you still have access to the ear of the Most High, being enabled to pour out your hearts before Him.

Blessed hour of prayer! O what a privilege for poor sinners to petition the eternal One in the all-availing name of Jesus Christ. But are we not easy-going and easily satisfied with our prayers? May we seek earnestness and real desire in our praying, and may we seek to glorify Him in our prayers to whom belongs the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Go on, praying ones, though the night be long and dark, and your souls hardly beset by the powers of darkness, and your strength spent through the doubts and fears of the shadows of death. Pray that Christ's blessed kingdom may come, that His power would become known among men in the saving of souls, and His glory stretch from sea to sea. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Looking Around Us

Asking for Safe Travelling

A few weeks ago, one person died and several others were injured after severe turbulence on a flight from London to Singapore. The plane dropped suddenly for a considerable distance, and people who were not wearing their seat belts were thrown across the cabin or into the ceiling, and so were various objects. Cups of hot tea were very dangerous as well as hard objects. The plane made an emergency landing in Bangkok, Thailand.

But experts in aeroplane safety say that deaths and injuries because of turbulence are rare, and pilots will do all they can to avoid it. Pilots are trained how to react to such emergencies, to keep down the danger to passengers and crew as much as possible. And no doubt experts are hard at work doing all they can to discover how to make aircraft safer.

But one may ask, Was there anyone on the plane who prayed to God about the flight, asking Him to keep them safe throughout that long journey. It is something we should always do before we take off, and again and again throughout the flight. The aircraft's crew cannot guarantee to keep us safe, but God can.

Yet, no matter what form of transport we use – whether we go by car or bus, by ship or on foot – we should pray to God before we set off. We are always in danger of something going wrong with the vehicle or the ship, or we may be hit by a vehicle if we are walking. We cannot keep ourselves safe, but God can. He tells us: “In all thy ways acknowledge Him” (Proverbs 3:6).

That applies to everything we do, to whatever we say or even think. We need God to help us to do things well and honestly, to keep us from doing wrong, to keep us from saying what is wrong, to keep us from thinking in ways that dishonour God. We cannot keep ourselves from sinning, but God can. Yet we should do all in our power to hold ourselves back from sinning – and to do so in dependence on God.

The Bible tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) – to pray all the time. In one sense it is impossible for us to pray every moment of every day; there are so many other things we must see to in the course of a day. But that is not really what is meant. What is meant is that we are to be so conscious of our need of God's help and His keeping that we should be ready, at every moment, without stopping, to ask for God's help and keeping – to acknowledge Him in all our ways.

Not only must individuals pray to God again and again for His care and direction; so must families. If at all possible, they should all gather together,

both morning and evening, to ask God for His blessing throughout each day and then throughout each night. Especially they should ask for spiritual blessings – that God would forgive their sins, make them holy and give them grace to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And morning and evening they should give thanks for all the blessings He has given them and all the care He has shown them. Let us seek to pray continually: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us” (Psalm 67:1). Remember, God does answer prayer.

“What Think Ye of Christ?”

This poem is by John Newton. It may be compared with the first article in this issue, which speaks of our need to see Jesus Christ as the Son of God. *Thrall* (third last line) refers to being a servant or slave, in this case a slave to sin.

“What think ye of Christ?” is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme.
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.
As Jesus appears in your view,
As He is beloved or not,
So God is disposed to you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.
Some take Him a creature to be,
A man, or an angel at most;
Sure these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost.
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I dare not confide in His blood,
Nor on His protection rely
Unless I were sure He is God.
If asked what of Jesus I think
(Though my best thoughts are but poor),
I say, He’s my meat and my drink,
My Life, my Strength and my Store;
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall;
My hope from beginning to end –
My Portion, my Lord and my All.

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