

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



August 2024

Vol 89 • No 8

Contents

Fearing the Lord	143
Pride and Destruction	146
Teaching from an Elephant	148
Conversion (1)	150
John Bunyan:	
5. The Prisoner	152
For Junior Readers:	
Forbidden to Give Away Bibles	153
A Mother's Love	154
The Second Man	155
A Soldier's Conversion:	
1. Going on Without Real Religion	156
For Younger Readers:	
Jesus as a Doctor	158
The Lamb of God	159
Looking Around Us	160

Cover picture: Elstow, near Bedford, where John Bunyan was born. See page 152.

The Young People's Magazine

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

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

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

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

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

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 89

August 2024

Number 8

Fearing the Lord

In the first article of this *Magazine* last month, we looked at some of what Christ says in Proverbs 8, where He speaks using the name, *Wisdom*. Throughout the Bible we find what is altogether wise set before us; and in Proverbs 8, Christ is telling us many things that we need to know if we would be truly wise in this world and get to heaven at last.

Among the wise things that Christ sets before us in that chapter is: “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (verse 13). To fear the Lord does not mean to be in terror of Him; it means to hate what is wrong and to love what is right. And, of course, the standard for what is right and wrong is the Word of God, the Bible.

Another chapter in the Book of Proverbs tells us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7), and a Psalm states that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (111:10). These two verses say more or less the same thing, but *wisdom* is to use *knowledge* in the best way. But if we do not fear God, we have not begun to have real, worthwhile knowledge – the knowledge that will take us safely through this world and on to heaven at last. If we do not fear God, we have not begun to take a wise course through life; we are acting foolishly. It is only by listening to God, and to Christ – who is the Son of God – speaking to us through the Bible that we can know what is the wise way to live.

We can explain the fear of God in another way: it is to have a holy respect for God and for His commandments. If we have a holy respect for God, we will want to do what is right and we will hate what is wrong; we will want to listen to God telling us what we ought to do and we will shut our ears to what is wrong.

To fear God is another way of saying *to be godly* – to be followers of God. Not perfectly, of course. Far from it; that is impossible in this world. But to be godly is to have a new heart, to be born again – not to live as ungodly people do but to live as those who have had a change of heart and who listen to what God tells us. It is not to live foolishly, ignoring the teaching of God's Word, but beginning to live wisely and to keep God's

commandments, for all God's commandments are right. These commands flow from God's wisdom; they show us how we ought to live, for God is our Creator and so He has the authority to tell us what we should do in every detail of our lives.

Let us be clear that we have no power from ourselves to fear God, and yet He tells us to keep all His commandments. Where does that leave us? One verse that these facts send us to is: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

We all lack wisdom, though some people have the beginnings of wisdom, which is the fear of God. So we should all be asking God to make us wise, or wiser. Those who are unconverted, foolishly going on in sin and in rebellion against God, should be asking for a new heart. They should be asking for grace to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and to live in the fear of God – to keep His commands. Those who have been converted should be praying for more grace, in particular to keep God's commands better.

Joseph was a notable example of a man who feared God. When the wife of his master Potiphar tempted him to commit adultery, to break the Seventh Commandment, he refused; but notice the reason he gave her: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). What most concerned him about the great wickedness that he was being tempted to commit was this: it was a sin *against God*. He wanted to have a holy respect for God and all His commandments. So, Joseph fully believed, he must not do this great wickedness, and those who fear God today will also want to avoid every kind of wickedness.

When we believe that people fear God, we realise that we can trust them. So when Joseph, before he had told his brothers who he was, said to them, "I fear God", he was saying to them something like: You can trust me to do what is right. Of course, Joseph was not perfect, but he had a real sense of living in God's presence. He knew that God could see what he was doing and saying. And if we fear God, we will have a real sense of living in God's presence and that we must appear at last before the judgement seat of Christ.

Immediately after the recent British General Election, many were commenting on the lack of trust people have in politicians – because lots of voters could not believe the promises that candidates for Parliament had been making in the hope of being elected. But the basic reason for that lack of trust is that candidates, at least the vast majority of them, do not fear God; many of them do not even claim to believe that there is a God.

It was a great blessing for Egypt to have Joseph as its chief minister under Pharaoh. And what a difference it would make to the government of our

country if most of its members truly feared God! Then we could expect that the laws of our nation would reflect the Ten Commandments. How much better that would be for everyone! Yet most people today wrongly think that they would live happier lives without being restricted by God's commands – as they might put it.

One day, a sailor came off a ship in New York's harbour. He was given to bad language and he wished to follow out his sinful desires somewhere in the city. After coming ashore, the sailor met a young girl who feared God. For some unknown reason, except that he had a wicked heart, he directed a flood of bad language towards her. The girl looked seriously at him straight in the face. She warned him solemnly about his danger. She told him that they must soon meet again before Christ's judgement seat.

The sailor had possibly been involved in at least one battle at sea. He described the girl's words as like a broadside fired into the whole side of an enemy ship, a volley of cannonballs which swept overboard all the sails of that ship and the spars to which the sails had been attached.

The sailor was now totally ashamed and went back to his ship. He could not get out of his mind the rebuke he had received from the young girl. He was deeply moved by it; the more he thought about it the more uncomfortable he felt. A few days afterwards, the Holy Spirit subdued his hard heart, and he was brought to submit to the Saviour. He too began to fear God consistently and did so for the rest of his life.

All who fear God need to be kept, even the girl who stood so firmly on God's side needed to be kept. She needed to pray, and I am sure she did. She needed to ask God earnestly to protect her from Satan and all his temptations, which are so clever and yet so wicked. None of us are able to stand up against them, except by God's grace and power. He is able to protect His children, and He will. So they need to pray the words of David in, for instance, Metrical Psalm 25:20:

“O do Thou keep my soul; do Thou deliver me:

And let me never be ashamed, because I trust in Thee”.

In view of all this, the Lord lays a responsibility on us all; it is this: “Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”. We are to be obedient to all that He tells us to do. It is our duty to keep His commands. But that is not the end; we must pass into eternity. Just as the young girl warned the sailor, we must all appear before the great Judge on the last day; we must then give account for everything that we have done. So where will we spend eternity? It will be on the basis of the Judge's verdict. “For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

Pride and Destruction

A passenger asked the ship's captain if he meant to anchor off a point at the mouth of the harbour. He did not expect that the captain would be rash enough to go any farther till the next day.

"I mean to be in the dock with the morning tide," was the captain's brief reply. It seems he was not prepared to delay, whatever the consequences.

"I thought perhaps you would send for a pilot," answered the passenger, thinking the captain would want to have a local man to guide him in to the dockside.

"I am my own pilot, sir," and the captain whistled with contempt for any such suggestion. He assumed he would get on perfectly well without any help from anyone, however well qualified.

As he went about his duties on the ship, a passing sailor remarked on the captain's daring, and added quietly how sure he was that he would take the narrow channel in to the dock.

"Is it dangerous?" asked the same passenger, feeling rather uneasy.

"Very, in a gale. And there's one coming, or I'm no sailor," replied the seaman, and added, "but if any man can do it, it's himself. Only he might boast once too often, you know."

Evening came, and the gale was becoming what sailors call "pretty stiff". The ship's mate touched another man disturbing his dreams of getting home.

"We are going in by the narrow channel," the mate told him, "and with the wind increasing, we may be dashed to pieces on the sandbank. It is foolhardy, to say the least." And the mate wanted some passengers to try to make the captain take a safer course.

Three or four of them went together to the captain and asked him to change course and take a safer way into the harbour. But, as at least one of them expected, the captain refused to change his mind. "We shall be in dock tomorrow morning, gentlemen," he assured them. "There is no danger whatever. Go to sleep as usual." And he promised to have them wakened by a sound from the shore.

Then he laughed at what he called their cowardice and insisted that he would do as he chose, that his life was as valuable as theirs, and he would not be dictated to by a set of cowardly non-seamen.

The passengers went to their cabins, but they could not settle to sleep. And in half an hour, the mate was back again. He told them of his concern: "If the gale increases, we shall have work to do that we did not expect". The cold night went on. The few who recognised the danger stayed on deck,

holding on by the ropes to keep themselves from being washed overboard.

The captain was heard with difficulty as he shouted his orders hoarsely from the bridge, but he stood calmly and in full control of himself. Sometimes he sneered at what he considered the foolishness of others, and seemed to be very much enjoying himself, surrounded as he was by flapping sails, groaning timbers, and the endless roar of wind and wave.

Others wished they were able to share in such enjoyment, but they realised the captain must have his own sense of enjoyment, and they tried to take courage from his fearlessness. Before long the cry was heard: "Breakers ahead". The ship was almost on the shore. They were nearly shipwrecked. The captain ran to the wheel; the sails were pulled down; but the wind was in control now; the captain had found a will that could defy his own.

Soon there was a cry to make the ship's small boats ready to take people off. But, as too often happens in time of danger, the ropes and chains were so entangled that the crew were held back as they tried to lower the boats. In the meantime, the ship, passengers and crew were hurrying on to destruction.

The passengers came rushing on deck from below in terror, amid the crashing masts and entangled rigging. Then came the bump of the ship against the bank, before the fatal plunge of the ship's bow deep into the sand, leaving it to be blown around by every next wave that struck the ship.

Only one of the boats survived the terrors of that fearful night. In the light of morning, among the other victims of the disaster that could be seen lying on the shore was the lifeless body of the over-confident captain. While alive, he refused the advice that was given to him, and very soon it was altogether too late to listen to wiser counsel than his own.

The story was told long ago. Obviously much has changed since then: ships are not usually now propelled by sails; vessels can travel faster and more reliably; but much has stayed the same. One thing that has not changed is the truth of Scripture, an example of which is highlighted in the title of this article: "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*" (Proverbs 16:18). In the story, the captain's pride went before his destruction, and his haughty spirit before his fall. And he was not the last to perish in some such way.

Human nature has not changed more generally. People other than the captain can be as foolishly stubborn as people ever were, as reluctant to take wise advice. That is a great pity; yet we need the sense to know when to accept the advice and when to reject it. We should pray about the matter.

The captain especially resembles those who receive advice about passing on safely towards eternity. Will they take warning about the lost eternity that is before them, or will they steer in the opposite direction and make for

heaven? Will they take heed to what is said about an ungodly life and the danger of going on in the ways of sin, or will they begin to live a holy life and trust in the Lord Jesus as the glorious One who came into the world to save sinners?

The captain thought he had plenty of time to get his ship safely into port. In fact the situation was far more dangerous than he expected and his skill much less than he thought. So we may have far less time to find Christ, and salvation through Him, than we imagine and lack the power that we thought we actually possessed. We are to seek Him "while He may be found", and we may have a very short time left. Let us seek Him now, as we find Him in the Scriptures, the preaching of the gospel and at the throne of grace – in earnest prayer.

The story was also used to illustrate the danger of someone bringing other people down with them to a lost eternity, just as the captain was responsible for the death of so many other people on that very stormy night. Many people tempt others into sin and show them a bad example, and so are responsible for their eternal loss. Ask the Lord to keep you from doing spiritual harm to anyone else – and to yourself.

There is one, and only one, safe way through life and on into eternity, and that is to listen to the words of Christ's messengers: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Teaching from an Elephant

George Cheever

Cheever was an American minister who wrote what was once a well-known book about John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This article has been edited.

I recently saw an account of an elephant working in India and on its way for a drink. It fell into a broad, deep tank or well which was built to hold water. To get him out, they threw in great quantities of bundles of rods, which the intelligent creature placed under his feet as fast as they were given. Thus he raised himself not only to the level of the water, but to the brink of the well, and moved out without difficulty.

Now this is the way to conquer the world and rise above it, when you have fallen into temptation, or into a sea of anxieties or cares or pleasures. Instead of being overwhelmed with them, tread them under your feet, and you are soon raised above them – by making use of them. It is for this very purpose that God suffers His children to fall into various temptations, as a discipline for their good. And if they have a spiritual sense as quick and

active as the instinct of that elephant, and a desire to get out rather than play about, indulging themselves in the things of the world, they will count it all joy, knowing that the trial of their faith worketh patience.

But patience must have her perfect work; then they shall be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him”.

The great tempter is Satan, along with our own evil heart of unbelief and the evil passions that tempt Satan to tempt us. The world is a great tank. Men come to it to drink, having a great thirst for its vanities, but thinking (if they are Christian men) that they will step very carefully, very sparingly.

Then they lose their watchfulness and their balance, and Satan pushes them in. Then when they are down, he throws in the cares of this world, the fullness of riches, the lusts of other things, the enjoyment of pleasure, the satisfaction of worldliness, the pride of life, the baits of worldliness; fashions, horse races and party politics; gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet; wine, oil, fine flour and wheat; sheep, horses and chariots; and souls of men.

All Satan’s things are various, but he comes to his victims with the powers of an anaconda to crush and consume them. Then they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. They fall in, and Satan and his forces fall on, and it is all over with their victims. They go down into the bottom of a well, and a mountain is thrown upon them, and how can they rise?

It soon gets to be a mountain, unless the elephant’s wisdom is practised from the start; if a man yields to the tide of worldliness, it is sure to carry him away. If a man watches and fights and prays, and puts under him what the devil meant to throw on top of him, to crush him down; then indeed he conquers, he rises, he makes Satan lay by the very steps by which he rises.

The devil intends to entangle you by his snares, and to overwhelm you by his bundles of rods; but you may make every one of the missiles he showers upon you, and the stumbling-blocks he throws in your way, the very means of rising towards heaven, the means of setting you at liberty. Only put them under your feet and you see heaven by means of them; but if you let them fall upon you, they hide heaven from you.

Satan means to pin you down to earth, to crowd you to the bottom of the well, and to keep you there by such a burden of worldliness that you cannot rise. Now it is a great thing to conquer Satan by his own weapons. Luther used to think that it was by the devil and temptation, as well as by the grace of God, that he was what he was. Satan helped to hoist him out of the well,

when he thought he had thrown him in headlong and shut him in without recovery.

The endurance of temptation is a great art. It is great wisdom to turn Satan's swords into ploughshares and his spears into pruning hooks. You may even harness him to the plough, to break up the fallow ground – if you will do it wisely. The creature most imposed upon in all the universe is probably Satan; he is the most unwilling and unexpected worker for good when he means evil. Everybody that has one particle of sincerity and faith outwits him. It is a shame to be conquered by him; and he that is held captive by him is held at his own will as well as Satan's.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Turn his own weapons against himself and he can do nothing with you. Baron Trench, when shut prisoner in a dungeon, used the very bars of the prison to remove the stones that built him in. You may do the same and Satan cannot hold you. You may compel him to let you out.

But the Baron was set on getting out; he did not love his prison; he had formed no attachment to its walls or its furniture or any fellow prisoner that made him unwilling to leave, or lukewarm and half-hearted in the work of getting out. The provisions of the prison had no strange fascination over him, as the mouldy crusts and brackish water of the vanities of this world have over Satan's captives here, taken captive by him at his will. You must be determined to get out; but if you love your prison, you will find it harder to come to a decision to leave than it is to break through the stone walls with your nails.

Conversion (1)

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

This is the first part of a sermon from a book of the preaching of M'Cheyne called *Additional Remains*. This sermon has been edited. It was preached in 1835 in Dunipace at the start of his ministry, while he was assistant to the minister in Larbert. M'Cheyne was later a noted minister in Dundee.

Psalm 40:1-3. I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

There can be little doubt that this Psalm applies first to the Lord Jesus Christ. The verses we have read might very well apply to David, or any

other converted man looking back on what God had done for his soul. Yet other parts of the Psalm cannot properly be the language of anyone but the Saviour; and verses 6-8 are directly applied to Christ in Hebrews 10: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God."

So the whole Psalm is to be seen as a prayerful meditation of Christ when the Father hid His face from Him. How truly might He who knew no sin, but was made sin for His people – He on whom it pleased the Father to lay the iniquities of them all – how truly might He say (in the language of verse 12) "Innumerable evils have compassed Me about: Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of Mine head; therefore My heart faileth Me".

According to this view, verses 1-3 are to be seen as recalling deliverance from some darkness in order to be comforted when discouraged at present. And who can doubt that He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief", that He experienced many more times of darkness and of heaven-sent relief than is recorded in the Garden of Gethsemane? For Him to go so often to pray alone seems to prove this.

But it is quite obvious that His description of His iniquities laying hold of Him is expressed in words most suitable to any burdened but awakened sinner. So the verses of my text are every way suitable to any converted soul looking back on the deliverance which God has worked out for him. "I waited patiently for the Lord", expresses all the intense anxiety of a mind aroused to know the danger he is in, and where his help must come from. "And He inclined unto me", expresses the bodily movement of someone who wants to hear, bending forward with attention. "And He heard my cry."

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

He expresses the state of an unconverted man by the striking picture of one who is in a horrible pit and sinking in miry clay. The change at conversion is compared to setting his feet upon a rock and establishing his goings and putting a new song in his mouth. Regarding my text as a faithful picture of that most blessed change in state and character which, in Bible language, is called conversion, I proceed to draw from these words two simple but most important conclusions: (1) the difficulty of conversion (2) the desirability of conversion.

John Bunyan

5. The Prisoner

Rev George B Macdonald

This is a further part of a paper given to last year's Youth Conference in New Zealand. The previous section spoke about Bunyan as a writer.

There appears to us a mystery in the providence that such a useful preacher of the gospel should be arrested and cast into prison. Bunyan was, for a number of years, removed from his wife, family and congregation. His usefulness was seemingly brought to an end. No doubt the devil thought he had gained a great victory in the imprisonment of this good man. But we can now see that it was all part of the Lord's plan. For his part, Bunyan seems to have been clear that his time in prison was part of his witness for the truth. He was preaching, but in a different way – by suffering for the truths he had formerly preached.

After he had been preaching for five years or so, he writes: "I was caught in my present practice [preaching] and cast into prison, where I have remained for as long again, to confirm the truth by way of suffering, as I was before in testifying of it according to the Scriptures by way of preaching". Many have been sent to prison for crimes; Bunyan's crime was to preach outside the Church of England and to refuse to give up preaching.

Bunyan lived through times of great public strife in England. Born in 1628, he died in 1688. These were times when there was a great struggle for power between King and Parliament. The English Civil War raged between 1642 and 1651. In Bunyan's days, there was the constant threat of civil strife and there were the solemn judgements of fire and plague. In 1666, a fire that began in a bakery in Pudding Lane destroyed 13 000 houses in London. This came to be known as the Great Fire of London. It was a time of suspicion and danger in national affairs.

Bunyan suffered much in prison. The conditions were unpleasant. He was greatly tried by thoughts of the poverty and suffering of his wife and children, especially his blind daughter Mary, whom he loved dearly. How high Bunyan's view of preaching was that he suffered so much. How very clear his call to preach was when he would languish in jail rather than agree to give it up.

The passages in *The Pilgrim's Progress* about the imprisonment of Christian and Faithful in the town of Vanity, and the account of Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle are especially touching in the light of Bunyan's own sufferings in prison. There Bunyan read the Bible, meditated deeply upon it and wrote books. His autobiography, *Grace Abounding*, was

written in prison. No doubt much of the scriptural underpinning of his famous work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, was formed there.

In the providence of God, John Bunyan was called not only to preach but to suffer for preaching. But the Lord graciously comforted His afflicted servant in prison. Bunyan felt it was a time when he received great light on the Word of God. He wrote from prison: "I never had in all my life so great an insight into the Word of God as now. Those scriptures that I saw nothing in before were made in this place and state to shine upon me. Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now: here I have seen and felt Him indeed."

"I have had" he goes on, "sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world. O the mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and God the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus have been sweet to me in this place."

Like Samuel Rutherford, he could perhaps say at times that his prison was, by God's blessing, made a palace.

For Junior Readers

Forbidden to Give Away Bibles

Do you know where Korea is? It is a peninsula in East Asia which is now divided into North Korea and South Korea. Up until about 1900 it was known as "the hermit Kingdom", because the government there was so afraid of foreign influence that it forbade all contact with people from other countries. The people were warned to avoid foreigners, and to hand out Bibles or other foreign books was a crime to be punished with death.

This rule did not deter Robert Thomas. He was the son of a Welsh minister. When he was young he heard of the need for the Scriptures in Korean and began to study Chinese and Korean. He first of all went to China as a missionary in 1863, to Shanghai and later to Chefoo, which was near the borders of Korea.

As a result of his skills with other languages he was able to do some work as a customs officer and this in turn let him enter Korea. He bravely brought a large number of Chinese Bibles with him. Despite the very harsh laws, some people were willing to accept these from him.

He then planned a second trip in 1866. This time he managed to get a place on board an American trading ship. They stopped briefly at an island along the coast of Korea, where Robert preached and distributed some

Bibles. As the ship continued up the river, he preached at each stop. Though the water was getting too shallow, the captain kept going until eventually the ship got stuck. It was then attacked by angry Koreans, and at last they set it on fire.

Thomas continued handing out Scriptures on the shore and at last he only had one Bible left. He tried to hand it to a soldier and, begging him to accept it, he then shut his eyes to pray. While he did so, the soldier shot him. He gave his life for the gospel, aged only 27, the first Protestant martyr in Korea!

In spite of government restrictions, Christianity gradually spread through the country. Many years later, another missionary, Samuel Moffett, met a man who had received a Bible from Robert Thomas all these years before!

Do you not think that those of us who are blessed with an abundance of Bibles, in our own country, should want to spread God's Word to those who still do not have Bibles of their own? And should we not also want to support the translation of the Word of God into other languages, so that everyone, in all nations, may yet have a Bible in their own language? *J van Kralingen*

A Mother's Love

Reprinted from *The Young People's Magazine* for September 1972, with editing. The writer is not known.

The daughter of a poor widow in the Highlands had left home and was leading a life of sin in a Scottish city. The mother went after her lost one, who relented and was on her way back home when temptation met her and she returned to her former haunts.

The lonely mother reached her cottage alone, and yet she was not alone, for she called on the widow's God, and He heard her cry. As she sat one sleepless night watching the dying embers of her fire, she heard steps, and then the door opened. She turned at the sound; it was her repentant child who had walked in.

After the mother's first glad surprise and the daughter's full confession were over, the daughter asked, "How came it, Mother, that at this late hour I found the door unlatched?"

"That latch has not been fastened day or night since you left", the mother replied. "I feared that if you came and found it shut, you might have turned away for ever." A mother's welcome was expressed in that open latch of the Highland cottage.

The widow's child did not have to stand outside and cry, Mother, unlatch

the door. A mother's love had done that while the daughter was yet far away. She found the door unfastened and went freely in.

Neither need the seeking soul ask the Lord to do what He has already done. Christ died for the ungodly. While sinners such as you were far away – yes, before you had even a being – the work of redemption was done. On the cross Jesus cried, “It is finished”. What remains for the sinner to do? Nothing, but to take thankfully the life which Jesus died to procure. For it is written, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Will not you, who are a sinner and need a divine salvation, come now to Him who waits to forgive and bless you? Though young, you need this salvation just as urgently as anyone older. “Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isaiah 55:3).

The Second Man

Taken from *Cheering Words* for 1968, with some editing and two extra paragraphs.

A shamefaced employee was summoned to the office of the senior partner in the company, who was an old man, to hear what was to happen to him. The least that he could expect was to hear that he was to be dismissed; but he might be taken to court, and even go to prison for some years.

The old man looked straight at the employee and asked him if he was guilty. The clerk stammered out that he had no defence.

“I shall not prosecute you, for the sake of those who love you,” said the old man. “If I let you stay, can I trust you?”

When the surprised clerk, who had broken down in tears, had given the assurance and was about to leave, the senior partner went on: “You are the second man who has fallen and been pardoned in this business. I was the first. What you have done, I did. The mercy you have received, I received. It is only the grace of God that can keep us both.”

We will have to appear before God when we die. Will we be shown mercy then? Of course, after death it will be too late to seek for mercy. But God is ready to show mercy to those who trust in Jesus Christ in this life. He calls us: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

For those who believe in Jesus it is especially true that it is only the grace of God that can keep us believing. Let us all ask God to keep us especially from serious sin. Let believers look to Him to keep them from all sin.

A Soldier's Conversion

1. Going on Without Real Religion

This article comes from Archibald Alexander's excellent book, *Thoughts on Religious Experience* and has been edited. The rest of the man's account of himself, including his conversion, is to be published next month, God willing.

I entered the Military Academy in 1828. As was my parents' practice, I was given a Bible and was told to read it often and make it the rule of my life. But, like most other youths, I kept it in my trunk; and (I blush while I say it,) I do not believe that during the whole time I was there, four years, I took it out to read more than six times. Then I probably had a desire to hide the act from my roommates around me, even if I did not actually do so.

How strange the dislike to that good Book, and how general this dislike among the thoughtless people around us! Yet I must confess that though my dislike to it was strong, I had a firm belief in its truth. And though, in such a body of young men, I must now and then hear one or another of those around me try to convince himself that it is untrue, yet I must say that I never could get rid of some respect for God in my heart, or of the firm conviction of the truth of His Word. Still I graduated from the Academy an unrepentant sinner. And being left to my own guidance, I followed the ways of pleasure and the world, like most other youths in the same circumstances.

After graduating in 1832, I went home. But alas, how changed! My father and brother had both died. Their spirits had fled – it is hoped to heaven. I did not see them in their dying hours; but their spirits, though gone, still spoke. I was told of the anxiety they both expressed, just before death, for me – in particular the reply of my father to the question put to him: had he any message to send to me? 'No, only to read my letters', was his reply.

Yes, I have read those letters, and long shall they be treasured up in remembering his care. Though the scenes at home, on this visit, were impressive, they did not produce within me the conviction that I was a sinner. I left my home again as lacking in repentance as when I had come. This time my sister gave me a Bible, with the prayer written in it that I "would make it the rule of my conduct and the guide of my life". As before, I stowed it away in my trunk, from there scarcely to come out, if ever at all. Probably for years together I did not so much as look into it, and during all this time, except when at home, I was as much a stranger to the church, as I was to the Bible.

What is more shameful, in some unaccountable way I lost my Bible in 1836; so that, from that time till late 1838, a period of two years, I was entirely without one. During all this time, besides having no Bible (I did not

dream of buying one), I was not able, at least for most of the time, to get to any church. I was serving with the army in the south, and everyone knows how unlikely one is to get serious impressions during active fighting.

Still I may say that, during all this time I had some sense of God before my eyes, though not to the extent that it made me love and serve Him, or cut off any of my darling pleasures. Yet how good the Lord was! Though I went on sinning day after day, and was often thrown into discussion with men around me who rejected the Bible, who did their utmost to argue or laugh me out of what they would call my early prejudices. And though I indulged in reading unbelieving books, God's Spirit would strive with me and would not give me entirely over to my own ways.

I returned North in the autumn of 1838 and again saw my widowed mother, who had raised me with a Christian's care, and who had early taught me those religious principles and feelings which, by the God's kindness, had never been entirely lost to me. Through them, under the same spiritual influence, I must believe that I was kept from completely falling away. I saw her again, showing as before the chastening influences of the religion she professed. The same calm and resigned face, the same sweet smile of welcome, still showed the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit on her heart. I thought I could see the workings of her feelings towards me, and I could believe that, in every look she gave me, she offered up a prayer for me.

I left her for a station in the North. I may say I went away this time with better feelings than I ever did before. I had by this time some experience of the world, and had already thought of the nothingness of its pleasures. Besides, the calm, peaceful happiness of my mother made me anxious to have her religion. I went away firmly determined to look more into the Bible at least, and thus take the first step towards making myself better. This time, another sister gave me a New Testament when I left.

When I got to my station, I read or tried to read it every evening. I tasked myself to one chapter. But a late return from a party or dance would cause me to put it off till the morning. Then if the breakfast bell should arouse me from my slumbers, I would neglect it till the evening. So, between parties and balls and laziness in the morning, my reading of the Testament was very irregular. But still I had a great respect for religion and admired the truths of the gospel. I would always uphold good principles of conduct in those around me, and would as often condemn those that were bad.

But all my ideas of virtue were founded on a wrong basis. I believed that it was in the power of every individual, of himself, to do good and keep from doing evil. So when I did see good principles in those around me, I admired the individual himself and not the Holy Spirit, who restrained him. And

when I saw wickedness in those around me, my condemnation was on the individual (and my self-righteousness could not make it too strong) and not on the sin which led him on.

But still, though I strongly criticised the conduct of others, upholding the good and denouncing the bad, I felt that I was not a Christian in the Bible sense of the term. I knew this because I was utterly unable to pray. When I went to bed, I often tried to think of the overshadowing presence of a God above me; but all was hard, dark and impenetrable. I could not become conscious of the existence of an all-merciful Saviour.

During all this time, I regularly attended a worship service, at least once every Sabbath. I was delighted either to hear or read a good sermon. But I heard or read it, more with the feelings of a critic than of a humble follower of the lowly Jesus desiring the sincere milk of the Word. So, whenever the preacher spoke of the beauties of virtue, I received pleasure from his sermon. Yet I had no consciousness that virtue was to be followed because God had commanded it, but because it seemed to be a necessary element in society; and perhaps because the virtuous person recommended himself to society by following virtue.

For Younger Readers

Jesus as a Doctor

Have you ever thought of Jesus as a doctor? Perhaps not. But He spoke of Himself as a physician, which means the same as a doctor.

He said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick" (Luke 5:31). It is not people who are well who go to a doctor but those who are sick. You would not go to see a doctor unless you were sick or had broken a bone or something like that, would you?

Jesus made lots of sick people better when He was in the world, as we read in the Bible. But He also made people's souls better (your soul is your thinking part). He still makes people's souls better though He is now in heaven.

We need to go to Jesus to be made better because there is something wrong with our souls. Ask Him to make you good; ask Him to put you right. He is able to do so.

The Lamb of God

When I my Saviour's kindness weigh
and all His wondrous love survey;
Lost in amazement, lo, I stand
and bless His high, delivering hand.

Who could have looked when Adam fell
and joined himself to death and hell,
That he might be again restored?
Yet so it pleased the gracious Lord.

The justice of the eternal God,
to appease His anger asked for blood.
Not such as ran in common veins
could quench His wrath or cleanse our stains.

Jesus the sinful world beheld
and all His soul with love was filled;
He loved our race, assumed our clay,
and bled to take our sins away.

The Father cast His wrath aside,
healed Adam's breach, forgave the pride,
And sealed a covenant with man
in Jesus made 'ere time began.

All that in Christ should e'er believe
were saved and suffered to receive
The life divine in Adam lost,
from Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

For this the Saviour gave His blood,
and thus the established covenant stood,
Thus sealed He, the life-giving Word,
that man, by faith, might be restored.

He then His seed began to draw,
the travail of His soul He saw;
He knew their number; so He strove
till all should know His sovereign love.

Angels of God the mystery view,
for if we're reconciled, with you
Gathered through Jesus into one,
we all at once shall share His throne.

John Cennick

Looking Around Us

Death Penalty for Murder

A prisoner called Mohamed Amra was being taken in May from court to a prison, when a car rammed the prison van at a toll booth near Rouen, in Normandy. Gunmen then opened fire at the prison officers; two of the officers were killed and two others were very seriously injured. Several hundred police officers were sent to carry out a manhunt for the prisoner and those who set him free.

French Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti said that “everything would be put in place” to find those who carried out “this vile crime”, adding that they would be found and punished “in a way that is proportionate to the crime”. But what punishment is right for the crime of murder?

First reports from France seemed to suggest that Amra had been killed by the police. But he had not killed anyone; nor, it seems, was he likely to. So the agents of the state would not have been justified in putting him to death.

But the state has a duty to put a murderer to death, not in the way of revenge but in the way of punishment. Paul speaks about capital punishment, the duty of rulers to punish by putting the deliberate murderer to death; the ruler “beareth not the sword in vain” (Romans 13:4), Paul tells us. It is a statement which follows on from the earlier verse, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man” (Genesis 9:6).

France would not use the penalty that *is* proportionate to the crime of murder. It is a secular state, having no official religion, and so it does not pay attention to the Bible. Nor does the United Kingdom and most other countries, though the UK is officially Christian; yet it does not in practice pay much attention to God and the Bible. This means that France (and the UK) cannot have God’s blessing in trying to deal with crimes of murder, for they reject what God tells them about how to do it.

Price £1.40