

The Young People's Magazine

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

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



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Volume 90

March 2025

Number 3

Spiritual Doors and Gates

The Lord Jesus is calling to all who hear the gospel: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). But, someone might ask, where will we find Him when He calls us?

The one who asks this question might be weary of trying to stop sinning. Or it might be someone who is heavy laden because of the guilt of their sin and does not know where to get help, someone who does not know where to find Christ. It may be someone who knows that Christ is calling those who are weary and heavy laden to come to Him, no matter what is causing that weariness. But this person asks, Where will I find Him who is able to save sinners from their sins and from all the consequences of these sins?

If you want to see the King of Great Britain, where should you go? I think you would find out where King Charles is staying: Buckingham Palace, perhaps, or Windsor Castle, or Balmoral Castle. And when you would go to the appropriate building, you would probably wait in a place from which you could see the door from which you would expect him to come out, and you would wait until you would see him.

Now Jesus Christ says, “Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors” (Proverbs 8:34). The man or woman, boy or girl, has God’s blessing who comes to the place where they would expect the Lord Jesus Christ to come out to speak to people – where they would expect Him to come out to speak to sinners.

But where are His gates and doors? Where does the Lord Jesus come to speak to sinners? Let us think about three such places.

(1.) ***The Bible***. Jesus reveals Himself in this wonderful Book, which is perfectly reliable in everything that is written in it. The Bible can never put you wrong; you can always trust what it says. And Jesus uses the words of the Bible to speak to sinners.

For instance, He may use the words of Hebrews 7:26: “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” to show a sinner how perfectly holy and pure He is. Then that sinner may come across the words of 1 Timothy 1:15: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners". Here the Saviour is showing Himself to sinners, and He is the only one who can save them.

And to encourage sinners to put their trust in Him – to believe in Him – He tells them that this statement is faithful, it is reliable; it is absolute truth. And it is glorious, reflecting the glory of Christ as a divine Person; it is so glorious that everyone who hears it or reads it should accept it as perfectly true. What we also need is that Christ would send the Holy Spirit to apply such truths to our souls, and with such power that we cannot stay away from Christ. When Christ reveals Himself to us, the Holy Spirit will make us able and willing to come to Him; we will believe in Him.

(2.) **Preaching.** Here is another door, or gate, at which Jesus appears; here too He reveals Himself to sinners. Writing to believers in Corinth, Paul the Apostle told them: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). The Apostle was telling them that God had appointed him and other preachers as ambassadors from God to them. So preachers like Paul were coming to speak with God's authority to the Corinthians. They were coming, in the place of Christ, to call them to receive the message about reconciliation between them and God.

Christ had died in the place of sinners; the Corinthians were sinners and so they must look to Christ; they must trust in Him. That is: if they would believe in Christ, God would be reconciled to them; everything that stood between them and God would be taken away, for Jesus' sake. Their guilt would be taken away; they would never be punished for their sins. What is more, the Holy Spirit would work in their souls, making them obedient to God's commands.

Today ministers come to preach to us as Christ's ambassadors. They preach with His authority. When they call on sinners, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15), they have Christ's authority behind them. How dangerous then for sinners to disobey such commands!

(3.) **Prayer.** This is the last door, or gate, that we are going to look at. If anyone is serious about his or her soul, they will try to pray. The Bible teaches us plainly that we cannot convert ourselves; it is only God who can change our hearts and lives; it is only God the Holy Spirit who can make us able and willing to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. How very much sinners like us need to be made holy so that we can escape a lost eternity and go to heaven when we die! How much we need to pray about these things!

God hears prayer. But we ought to remember that it is only for Christ's sake that God will answer us. It is only through Christ's work in this world – through His sufferings and death – that any blessing comes to us, and that

includes answers to prayer, especially for the salvation of our souls. And we must keep praying, even if the answer seems to be delayed.

Long ago, in a city in the southern United States, a school needed a headteacher. A man applied who was well qualified for the position, and he was appointed. Afterwards he found out exactly what his duties were, but there was one duty which surprised him and created a big difficulty for him: every day he was to open the school with prayer.

But he did not believe the Bible; he did not even believe that there is a God. He was now in a difficult position: how could he try to pray to God, in whose existence he did not believe? But he very much wanted to keep his job. He decided that he would get round his difficulty by learning some form of prayer which he would repeat each day in front of the pupils.

As the start of the school day was approaching, he went away into a nearby forest, where no one would hear him, and no one would interrupt him. There he began to say his “prayer” aloud, as if he was speaking in front of the children. But before he was finished, he became deeply aware of the existence of Almighty God and of what is true about Him: that, for instance, He is infinite, wise, just and merciful.

In particular, this newly appointed headteacher became deeply conscious that he had sinned in denying the existence of God. We are told that when the time came to start the first school day with prayer, he had become a new creature in Christ Jesus (one assumes that, in the prayer he composed, there was some Scripture truth, or else he remembered some of the teaching he received in his childhood). When he did begin to pray in the school, he had now believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; he had turned from his sin and from his unbelief, which itself is a sin.

During his time in that school, God used him as an instrument in the conversion of several of his pupils. He later became a preacher of the gospel. Quite unexpectedly, the door of salvation opened to him, and Christ came out to reveal Himself to him. How wonderfully and graciously the Saviour works! He is still able to work wonderfully. Indeed every conversion is a wonderful, gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

We need to watch daily at Christ’s gates and keep waiting at the posts of His doors. In other words, we need to seek Him every day, and to keep seeking until He speaks to us. We must keep watching at all the doors where Christ is ready to come out and reveal Himself to sinners. If we are serious about seeking Him, we will make good use of the opportunities we have: to read the Bible, to listen to scriptural preaching and to pray. Remember Christ’s promises: “Ask, *and it shall be given you*; seek, *and ye shall find*; knock, *and it shall be opened unto you*” (Matthew 7:7).

John Welsh: a Man of Prayer

5. A Dishonest Trial

John Welsh was a noted minister in Ayr for five years. Some of last month's article is summarised in the rest of this paragraph. He went to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which had been arranged to take place in 1605 in Aberdeen. But at short notice it was made known that the King wished this Assembly not to meet. Some of the few who came to Aberdeen held a brief meeting, which was soon declared to be against the law. Soon afterwards Welsh and others were arrested, taken to Edinburgh and sent to Blackness Castle until a trial could be arranged.

The King, James VI, sent the Earl of Dunbar, one of his court favourites, to Scotland to see to the arrangements for the trial. He sent James Melville, a noted minister in Fife, to Welsh to see if he was prepared to make some admission of blame. Melville undertook the mission, "glad to have the occasion to talk with his brethren and see how God wrought with them".

First though, they met their lawyers, who also were sent on the same mission as Melville. The lawyers were able to go so far as to promise that if the ministers would, without any confession of wrongdoing, only submit to the King on account of the offence taken (not the offence given) and give up their document which declined the authority of the Council in church matters, they would be restored to their charges and all their expenses would be paid back.

Welsh describes all the lawyers' arguments as temptations, and adds, "It pleased our God to strengthen us to overcome them . . . and convict the consciences that, without iniquity and betraying the Lord's truth and crown, we might not only not do the least evil for the appearance of ever so great a good. . . . Necessity was laid on us to defend His truth although our blood should go for it, and we had no warrant to look for any blessing either to ourselves or others by the omission of any part of our duty."

The next day they had a further discussion with one of the lawyers, Thomas Hope, whom they convinced of the rightness of their case, and he left them promising to appear for their defence the next day if indeed the trial would go ahead. Even at this late stage, the authorities had not told them when it would happen. And in the evening James Melville arrived with two other Fife ministers, "with whose fellowship", says Welsh, "we were greatly comforted".

After prayer, they began to discuss how far they might go. It became clear that, in conscience, they could make no concession. Welsh describes his and Melville's conclusions: "We thought that it was our duty to give a full testimony to the whole truth with all boldness, if the Lord would strengthen

us, and to endure the utmost which men could do to us, yea, even to the sealing of it with our blood if the Lord would call us and strengthen us” to do our duty. They were “calling to mind that all compromises which have ever been made in the cause of God have always strengthened the enemy, done injury to the truth, enfeebled the weak, and were never to this day joined with a blessing in the end. . . .

“These our resolutions being perceived by our brother Mr James [Melville], it did greatly comfort him, he affirming that what made him so sparing at this time in encouraging and exhorting others to the cross was the infirmity he had seen in the whole ministry. Better it were never to resolve than afterwards to fall back. But seeing the Lord had given us the full determination to bear whatever was required for the defence of the truth, according to the measure of grace and strength which the Lord should minister, therefore was he comforted.”

Between five and six, the following morning, the ministers were wakened by the sound of the trumpet and the clank of horses’ hooves outside. It was a party of the King’s guard which had come to bring the ministers to Linlithgow for their trial, which was to begin before daybreak. As soon as Welsh heard the trumpet he got up and cried, “Courage now, brethren, let us sing the eleventh Psalm”. It was doubtless the sincere exercise of their hearts for such men to sing, “I in the Lord do put my trust . . .”, and to go out in that spirit after prayer, but they were given no time even for breakfast. After their four-mile walk to Linlithgow, they had the pleasure of meeting about 40 of their brethren who had gathered to support them. Among them was Andrew Melville, then Principal of St Mary’s College in St Andrews (now part of St Andrews University) and James Melville’s uncle.

But the start of the trial was delayed till well on in the day to allow for further private negotiations with the prisoners, in the hope of winning concessions. The prisoners’ request to the Privy Council to delay further proceedings to allow them to meet their presbyteries and synods, who had sent them to the Aberdeen Assembly, was firmly rejected.

When Welsh and his fellow-prisoners heard this, James Melville reports, “they saw that the Lord had called them that day to give a testimony to the liberty of the kingdom of Jesus Christ . . . at which they were not afraid, but exceedingly glad and courageous; only they besought the brethren to give them their advice, that they might not injure the cause,” which was far more important to them than anything that could happen to themselves. As one of their ministers was concluding their conference with prayer, an officer interrupted him with the demand that the six ministers go with him to the Council for their trial.

The lives of the six prisoners, Welsh among them, were at stake in this trial. Their two lawyers argued before the court that the ministers ought not to be tried for high treason as they had clearly not been granted the 40 days allowed them by law so that they could prepare their defences. The argument was not accepted and, not for the last time, the court was less than open in the way the votes of its members were counted.

Hamilton, the King's advocate, then addressed the court with such hatred against the truth that Andrew Melville told him to his face the following year that the devil "could have done no more against the saints of God". Hamilton rested his case on an Act of Parliament of 1584 which gave the King and his councils total authority over all his subjects in every possible way. But the defence were able to point out that this Act had been changed in 1592 to make it clear that it did not apply to church matters. Welsh told the court that he and those who were accused with him believed that church affairs should be judged only by the Church but that they fully acknowledged the authority of the King and Council in other matters.

Later the presiding judge announced that all the judges had found the prisoners guilty of treason. "Say not all, my Lord," cried the Earl of Mar; indeed it was said that only five out of the 23 or more members of the court agreed with the decision given in their name.

The jury was then called, some of whom, Welsh freely accepted, were "faithful and honest men", but others could easily be threatened into doing what the authorities wanted. Shockingly the Lord Advocate told the jury that they would lose their lands, goods and lives if they did not bring in a verdict of guilty. Thomas Hope, speaking for the defence, exhorted them "to fear the great and righteous God and His Son Jesus Christ, who shall be the great judge of the world". They were to remember that the accused were held both in the Church of God, and in the country generally, with almost universal respect.

For Junior Readers

Knocking

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you", said the Saviour. It is obvious that by this action He meant prayer. He is speaking about someone who wants to get attention in order to get help – he knocks.

Where are we to knock? Normally we knock on a door. The Saviour says, "I am the door"; "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me".

When are we to knock? “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud,” says David. “Pray without ceasing”, says Paul. In other words, at any time and all the time, we are to pray.

For what are we to knock? Paul tells us, “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” But, above all, we are to ask for spiritual blessings, because these are blessings for our souls and for eternity. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.”

How are we to knock? We must knock urgently; we cannot knock too loudly! Prayer must be sincere and earnest. Jacob said, “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” and the Bible goes on to tell us, “And [the Lord] blessed him there”. The Lord answered Jacob’s prayer. We are also to keep on knocking. “I waited patiently for the Lord,” said David; “and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.” And He also encouraged Himself with these words in Psalm 27: “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

The godly John Newton also encouraged this same knocking and praying with the advice:

“Thou art coming to a King; large petitions with thee bring;

For His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much.”

Here is the command, “Knock”. And here is the promise, “It shall be opened unto you”. So if you have never knocked before, will you not start knocking now? Adapted from William Jay’s *Morning Exercises* by J van Kralingen

James' Last Day

James and his parents had a place to live in, but it was far from being a nice, tidy home. His parents drank too much; indeed they were often drunk. They often left him to wander around without food, and he had almost no clothes. He never had any shoes until he was given a pair at the Ragged School, where children whose parents could not afford to give them proper clothes were taught. But James could not wear the shoes he was given as his feet were swollen because of the cold, frosty weather; he had to go about with no shoes or socks.

Then he was found to be suffering from tuberculosis (TB). His teacher went to see him. He found James lying on a little dirty straw; that was his bed. His mother brought the only chair in the house for the teacher to sit on, but it was little more than a frame of a chair; there was almost no bottom to it. A large box, placed in the middle of the floor, was used as a table.

The mother was dirty and her clothes were ragged. She was more interested in getting drunk than in cleaning the room; so the walls were dirty and the floor was filthy. There were no books except a few little ones that James had been given at the Sabbath school he went to. The door was battered and broken, and the cold wind was blowing snowflakes through the broken window.

James was near to death, but he had a better home to go to, in heaven, where his Saviour had gone to prepare a place for him. In the Sabbath school he would have learned about Jesus and how He had come into the world to save sinners. Yet it may have been in the Ragged School that he was first brought to know Jesus as a Saviour and to trust in Him for salvation, for at that time, in almost every school, the pupils would have been taught something about true religion.

James was glad that he would be soon with Jesus in heaven. He knew that he was dying and he asked the teacher to read to him and tell him more about the love of Jesus.

Another day, when the teacher went to see him, he found James much worse. James was very concerned about his brother and sister who were standing near him. First he spoke to his brother; he said, "George, you must try to be a good boy and pray to God to give you a new heart". Then he told his sister that she must go to school, where she would learn about Jesus and the way to heaven.

James' father and mother were also in the room. He looked at his mother and said to her: "Mother, will you give up drinking and go to chapel? And pray for a new heart. I would like to meet you in heaven. Do, Mother." But he knew she could never get to heaven unless she would turn from her sins in repentance and believe in Jesus.

His mother's eyes were full of tears and they ran down her cheeks; she sobbed out loud. As she thought of her son's dying request, her conscience began to trouble her, and she confessed that she had never really been a mother to James, and that his death, which she knew was now so near, was the result of her neglect. She had treated James badly, yet he was speaking to her so lovingly: "I would like to meet you in heaven".

The boy had become so weak that he could hardly speak, but he revived a little. Then he told his father that he [James] would soon die and go home to God. And with a sorrowful look, he said, "Will you give up swearing, Father, and bad words and begin to read the Bible and go to a place of worship? His father could not answer James, but just stood wiping away his tears with the sleeve of his tattered jacket. But his mother answered instead: "He will, James. Yes, he will."

We do not know what happened afterwards. But if the father was to change his ways, he needed the Holy Spirit to work in his heart and make him a new creature, one who was willing to obey God's commandments. Unless the Holy Spirit will come to a sinner and work savingly in his soul, he will not turn from his sins and believe on the Lord Jesus. But no doubt James was praying for his father and his mother and we can hope that God heard James's prayers and that the Holy Spirit gave them a new heart and made them able and willing to believe in Christ.

James' younger sister Mary was in the next room; she also was very ill with the same disease (TB) as her brother. He asked his mother to carry him into Mary's room. He kissed her lovingly, spoke to her about Jesus and said farewell. Then he was carried back to his straw bed.

He did not forget his grandmother, who had been kind to him. He asked his teacher to tell her to give up buying things on the Sabbath, "and read the big Testament you gave her, and go to chapel".

The teacher then prayed for James, and no doubt also for his sisters, his brother and his parents. In less than an hour afterwards, we are told, "he exchanged his wretched home and cold straw bed for the white robes and the palm of victory and a place among the redeemed on high". He went to heaven, a place which is far better than the nicest of homes in this world.

What is more, James had left behind all sinning. He would never sin again; he would never again offend the God he began to love in this world. And in heaven he loves God perfectly and always obeys Him, and he will do so for ever and ever.

But let *us* seek God earnestly and urgently, and He will find us and we will find Him. If we go to Christ for salvation, all will be well in this life. And when the time will come for us to die, all will be well in heaven for ever. Christ says to each of us: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

Seeking Christ Early

Rev Donald MacLean

This article was first published at the beginning of *The Young People's Magazine* for July 1949, the first issue for which Mr MacLean was editor.

The call to seek Christ comes to all classes of men. "Doth not wisdom cry and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men, I call; and

My voice is to the sons of man" (Proverbs 8:1-4). If Christ is not found, then all is lost. To have gospel privileges, a parent's instruction at home, warnings and exhortations from the pulpit, to be familiar with the letter of God's Word – these things in themselves are not to be despised.

But they can never take the place of a saving knowledge of Christ. Only in Him is salvation to be found. He is "the stone which was set at naught by [the] builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:11,12).

All who find Christ were taught to seek Him, for it is in the way of seeking that He is found. Thus Christ declared when He was on earth: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". He then adds the assurance: "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

He illustrates this truth in the parable of the friend who earnestly asked his neighbour for three loaves to provide for a traveller who obtained his desire "because of his importunity" (Luke 11:5-8). Our seeking must be earnest and it must go on. It must arise from a sense of our need and from a firm conviction that our needs can only be met by Him, for "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell".

Among our many needs, we might mention first of all, our need of the Holy Spirit. This need arises from the great, solemn truth that we are, in ourselves, apart from the grace of God, dead in trespasses and sins. The child on its mother's knee, the little girl beginning her schooldays and the boy approaching early manhood are all in this sad condition. Has this truth ever been impressed on your conscience?

Do you find your heart like a stone in the things of God? Do you find the Sabbath a weariness and cry with others, When will it be gone? (Amos 8:5). The reading of the Bible is a burden almost too heavy to be borne. The prayer meeting is considered dull and uninteresting. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (James 3:10). These are evidences that you have no spiritual life in your soul. So great then is your need of the Holy Spirit in order that you may seek Christ in a real way! There is no true seeking apart from the Holy Spirit; and where there is no true seeking, there will be no true finding.

We read of some who appeared to be seeking Christ but, when He taught that no man could come unto Him unless it were given to him by His Father, "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him" (John 6:66). "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon

Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Simon Peter was a true seeker, led and taught by the Holy Spirit. He knew the value of finding Christ and hearing His Word. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

The second great need is the pardon of our sins. This arises from the fact that we are guilty before God of breaking His commandments and despising the gospel of His dear Son. To be guilty means to deserve punishment. The punishment must fit the crime and the eternal Judge has told us what the punishment of sin is: “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Now pardon is to be found in Christ alone, for “the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (Matthew 9:6). He who finds Christ receives from Him the forgiveness of his sins, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). The blessing of the one who finds Christ is the blessing of the man “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”. All who die apart from the Saviour must reap the due reward of their sins in eternity. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

There are many other needs which Christ is able to meet. We need deliverance from temptation and from the attractive pleasures of this world. We need to be saved from the deceitfulness of our own hearts and eventually from death and the grave. However young we may be, we need this “great salvation”. It is to be found in Christ alone, for “salvation belongeth unto the Lord,” whose blessing is upon His people. “For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation” (Psalm 149:4).

The prophet Jeremiah says, “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him,” and then he adds, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:25-27). The voice of Wisdom cries, “I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me” (Proverbs 8:17). When Josiah, King of Judah, attained the age of 16, “while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father” (2 Chronicles 34:3). Samuel, who afterwards became a mighty prophet in Israel, was but a lad when he heard the voice of God speaking to him in the temple at Shiloh.

Timothy, who from a child had known the Scriptures, was made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus and served Christ in the ministry while he was still a young man. These men sought the Lord early and found Him, and their ransomed souls are now before the throne praising Jesus, who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them

not; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). Be persuaded then to seek Jesus in the days of your youth. Time is passing swiftly, "for what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

To die Christless is to be lost for ever. To find Him is to be saved with an everlasting salvation. "For whoso findeth Me", Christ says, "findeth life and shall obtain favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 8:35). He is the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but through Him. Seek the Lord therefore, while He is to be found, and call upon Him while He is near, for "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

"Return unto Me" (2)

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

This is another part of a sermon from the book of the preaching of M'Cheyne called *Additional Remains*. This sermon comes from his own notes and has been edited. It was preached in 1838 in Dundee. The first section focused on the point: "All who have come to Christ are forgiven".

Isaiah 44:21,22. *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art My servant: I have formed thee; thou art My servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee.*

2. All who have come to Christ are God's servants. "Thou art My servant" Two reasons are given: (1.) "I have redeemed thee." (2.) "I have formed thee."

(1.) *Because redeemed.* When a man consents that Christ shall be his Surety, he feels that he is not his own, but bought with a price. So David felt: "Truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds". So Paul felt, when he lay gasping on the ground: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Before conversion, the unconverted thinks he is his own: May I not do what I will with mine own? He was the willing slave of the devil. But when he sees the price laid down for him, he feels that the Lord has redeemed him out of the house of bondage. Now he says: I am the Lord's. Now he is more the servant of the Lord than ever he was of the devil. O dear Christians, would that I could see more of this among you: devoting yourselves to the Lord.

(2.) *Because formed by God:* "I made thee, and formed thee from the womb" (Is 44:2). The whole work of grace is the Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes. Paul says, "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's

womb . . . to reveal His Son in me;" and God to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb, I sanctified thee". God marks His own from their mother's womb.

When they are infants, God treasures up every prayer for them. Every mother's tears He puts into His bottle and her sighs into His book. In boyhood, He preserves their souls from death, gives them times of awakening, fixes words in their memory. "I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me." When His time comes, He guides them to some fitting ministry; or, by some sore trial, awakens and leads them to Christ – draws, wins, comforts, builds up the soul. He is a faithful Creator. "Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it." That soul becomes a servant indeed.

Some of you know that God has formed you. You can trace His hand guiding you ever since you were born, guiding you when you did not know Him: guiding you in the mother that wrestled in prayer for you; in dear ones that prayed for you, who are now in their lonely grave; in the ministers that you have been brought to; in the texts they have been guided to. Be the Lord's servant. Take Him as your Master. Be content to suffer with the Lord Jesus.

3. God will not forget the souls who have come to Christ: "Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me." The children of God often think that He has forgotten them. Often, when they fall into sin and darkness, they feel cut off from God – as if His mercies are clean gone for ever. But learn here that God never forgets the soul that has come to Christ Jesus.

(1.) So it was with Moses in the land of Midian. For 40 years he thought God had forgotten His people. He wandered about as a shepherd in the wilderness for 40 years, sad and desolate. But had God really forgotten His people? No, He appeared in a flaming fire in a bush and said, "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people . . . and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them". God knows your sorrows, "O soul who has come to Christ.

(2.) So it was with David. (See Psalms 13,31,77.)

(3.) So it was with Hezekiah, when God told him he must die. Hezekiah wept sore: "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward; O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me" (Is 38:14). Did God forget him? No; God said this to him: "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: I will add unto thy days fifteen years". God never forgets the soul in Christ.

(4.) So shall it be with God's ancient people, the Jews: "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Is 49:14,15).

(5.) So it is in the words of the text: "Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me". The world may forget you; your friends, your father, your mother, may forsake you; yet "thou shalt not be forgotten of Me".

A word to souls who have come to Christ. The Lord cannot forget you. If you stand before God in your own righteousness, I see how you might be separated from His love and care; for your goodness is like the morning cloud and the early dew. But you stand before Him in Christ: and Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever. You shall be held in everlasting remembrance. The world may forget you; your friends may forget you, for this is a forgetting world; you may not have a tombstone over your grave; but God will not forget you. Christ will put your name beside that of His faithful martyr, Antipas (Revelation 2:13). In life, in death, in eternity, "thou shalt not be forgotten of Me".

For Younger Readers

Are You Rich?

Two young children were sheltering from the cold wind in the porch of a house. They were wearing ragged coats that were too small for them and would not have kept them warm.

"Any old papers, Lady?" they asked.

The lady was busy. She wanted to say, "No". And then she looked down at the children's feet. She saw the soaking sandals they were wearing. How very cold their feet must have been!

"Come in," the lady said kindly, "and I'll make you a cup of hot cocoa." The lady brought the children not just cocoa, but also toast and jam. After some time, she looked back into the room where they were. She saw the girl holding an empty cup in her hands, looking at it.

"Are you rich?" the boy asked.

"No," the lady told them. And the girl put her cup carefully back on its saucer. Then they left the house, holding bundles of papers against the cold wind. But why did the boy ask such a question? The girl's next words will help to explain: "Your cups match your saucers".

The lady was not rich. But these children were very poor. At home, they would have had cups of all sorts. Probably some of the cups had no saucers, and perhaps none of the cups matched a saucer. But this showed the lady how thankful she should be for what she had. We too should be thankful for what we have, for what God has given us.

Like the Flower of Grass

A preacher took for his text 1 Peter 1:24,25: “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

After the service, the friend I had been sitting with told me of an experience connected with those verses that he would never forget. He was in hospital in his early teens for an operation. There were others in that ward waiting for the same operation, and no one undergoing that operation was, as a rule, in any danger.

On the Sabbath morning after the operation, the hospital chaplain came to take a service on the ward, and he spoke from these verses. He emphasised the uncertainty of human life, and the need to consider where we would be when our life here ended – so quickly, like the flower in the grass.

After he had gone, the man in the next bed laughed at what the chaplain had said; he mocked the truth that God revealed in the Bible. My friend was very upset at what the man said. But bedtime came and he fell asleep.

In the morning the next bed was empty! My friend asked the nurse where the patient was.

“O, didn’t you hear us in the night?” she said, “the man died in the night.” My friend has never forgotten it. To die when mocking God’s Word; how solemn!

Not long ago, a man was heard wishing he would die with a handful of money in his hand at Newmarket Races. God heard him, and with a handful of money in his hand he dropped dead on the racecourse — with no thought of the Maker we must all give account to, and with no prayer on his lips.

Adapted from *Cheering Words* for September 1985

The Kind Student

A man called John Köller lived in the village of Helsen in Germany. In 1847, there was a serious shortage of food. Probably there had been a poor harvest, and the price of food went up seriously. So John did not have enough money to buy what would feed himself and his family. So he had to sell his house; it was where his family had lived for several generations. No doubt that made him rather sad.

The day before the house was to be sold was a Sabbath, and John and his wife went to church as usual. The text for the sermon was, “Take therefore

no thought for the morrow” (Matthew 6:34). The verse, of course, does not mean that we should not think about what we are going to do the next day, or that we should make no preparations for it; it means that we should not be overly concerned about it. Instead we should pray to God about our concerns for tomorrow.

John was very impressed by the words in another verse, the verse which was two back from the minister's text: “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”. John's wife was very worried about what would happen when the house was sold, and perhaps especially about where they would then live. But John, as a child of God, was very much comforted by the verse which spoke about what his heavenly Father would do for him. And he told his wife how this part of the Word of God had given him an assurance that all these things would work together for their good (see Romans 8:28).

This sale took place on the Monday. Somebody offered to pay 450 thalers for the house (a thaler was a large silver coin). Then the auctioneer (the man who was conducting the sale) asked, “Will no one bid higher?” A student with a sturdy walking stick in his hand and a pack on his back called out, “Five hundred thalers”. There was no other bid; the house was his.

The auctioneer asked him: “What is your name?”

The student answered, “That has nothing to do with the matter. I have not bought the house for myself, but for its former owner.” He explained that he was passing through the village on his way from his home to University. He had heard enough about the Köllers' problem to make him go to ask their neighbours about them. And he had seen them at church the previous day. He went on to say that 500 thalers would not ruin him. And he added, “I can give them [the coins]; and if I miss them, I shall do so willingly if faithful Christians have been helped by that”.

The Köllers went to thank the student, but he had disappeared, and they never saw him again. The home that had belonged to previous generations of their family was now theirs once more. Over the front door of the house they had carved the words of Scripture that had so encouraged them: “Take no thought for the morrow; your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”.

Let us learn to cast all our cares upon the Lord God, who is able to provide for all our needs. But let us realise that our greatest needs are the needs of our souls – to have our sins forgiven, to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, to be made more and more holy, and to be brought safely along the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. May we, by God's grace, seek these blessings earnestly.

Looking Around Us

Rome's Relics

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris has been restored after a disastrous fire in 2019. Great pains were taken to preserve, from the fire, what is claimed to be the crown of thorns that was placed on Jesus' head before the crucifixion. Now it has been brought back to the cathedral.

This "crown of thorns" is a circle of rushes cased in a crystal and gold tube. But rushes are not thorns; so it seems strange to claim that this relic was the original crown of thorns. It is also strange to believe that the thorns were preserved from decay until they could be somehow placed in their crystal and gold tube. But why have the thorns been replaced by rushes? Surely it should be obvious that this relic cannot possibly be genuine. This "crown of thorns" was never placed on Jesus' head. It never caused any part of the sufferings He endured for sinners – so that they might be saved.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a large official book of the teachings of that body, but so often these teachings are not according to Scripture. The book speaks of venerating relics, which are often pieces of bones belonging to those whom Romanists call "saints", people who are specially "holy" according to Roman Catholic ideas and who have performed miracles – at least that is what is claimed. The crown of thorns, for instance, is included among Roman relics.

Veneration is defined by the Roman *Catechism* as "a feeling of profound respect for someone or something". Perhaps the use of the word *veneration* is meant to avoid suggesting that the relics are being worshipped. But "profound respect" sounds very like worship, and no doubt what many people are doing when they come to see a relic is trying to worship it. In any case it is clearly forbidden by the Second Commandment, which tells us not to bow down to anything or anyone in worship, except God.

We should go to Scripture for directions about worship. In particular, let us go to the words of the Lord Jesus, as reported in Scripture, for directions; He said, when He was being tempted by the devil: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4:8). So no one is to worship the crown of thorns, even supposing they could be sure it is the crown that was put on Jesus' head in wicked mockery, and there is absolutely no reason to believe that it is the original crown of thorns.

But we are to worship God; we are to worship each of the three Persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We are to seek to give to each of Them the glory that is Theirs as Divine.

UK Youth Conference 2025

Arrangements (God willing)

Venue: Strathallan School, Forgandenny, Perth, PH2 9EG.

Dates: Wednesday, April 9, to Friday, April 11.

Chairman: Rev K D Macleod.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

Applications: to Free Presbyterian Church, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE, or norma.morrison@fpcoffice.org. (Please make contact by March 14, if possible). If necessary, you can contact Rev J B Jardine by phoning 01859 502253. The fee is £50 for those in full-time employment and £25 for others. Cheques should be payable to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; to pay by bank transfer contact the e-mail address above.

Programme

Wednesday, April 9

2.30 pm **What Is so Special About the Authorised Version?**

What We Ought to Know About Our Bible

by *Mr D P Rowland*

7.00 pm **James Renwick**

A Noted Covenanter

by *Mr F R Daubney*

Thursday, April 10

9.30 am **Defending the Faith**

Reasons for Believing the Truth

by *Rev Roderick Macleod*

2.30 pm **Guided Tour to Blackness Castle and Linlithgow Palace**

conducted by *Rev D Campbell*

7.00 pm **Can the Christian Church Continue?**

The Gates of Hell Cannot Prevail

by *Rev K D Macleod*

Friday, April 11

9.30 am **Joseph**

Lessons from His Life

by *Mr R W van Kralingen*

Price £1.50