

# The Young People's Magazine

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

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*“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*



***April 2025***

***Vol 90 • No 4***

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**Cover picture:** An Edinburgh street scene. See page 74.

## The Young People’s Magazine

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

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

**Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address** should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; tel: 0141 332 9283; e-mail: william.campbell@fpcoffice.org. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates for 2025, including postage, are: *Free Presbyterian Magazine* £36.80 (£2.95 per copy); *Young People’s Magazine* £20.00 (£1.50 per copy); both magazines £55.20. 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 90

April 2025

Number 4

## What Is Prayer?

*The Shorter Catechism* tells us that “prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God” (and the whole answer is just a summary of what Scripture teaches about prayer). We are to be asking God for what we really want; what we ask in prayer must truly come from sincere desires.

People may say some words of prayer, although they do not really want what they ask for. These prayers are only formal – they have the form of prayer but not the reality. People whose prayers are formal are not, so to speak, putting their heart into their prayers. They may, for instance, ask God to bless the Bible to sinners all around the world. But they may not really want God to bless His Word to themselves. So what they ask cannot possibly be sincere.

When we pray, we should really *want* what we ask for. So we should ask God to give us grace to pray. The Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of prayer” in the Bible. That means: He is the One who makes us able to pray in a right way, the One who puts right desires into our hearts. These are the kind of desires that it will be to God’s glory for Him to answer.

*The Shorter Catechism* goes on to tell us that we are to ask “for things agreeable to [God’s] will”. So we must not ask for things that we know are sinful. But how do we know if God is willing to give us what we ask for? First of all, God has given us the Bible to teach us what is right and wrong – particularly He has given us the Ten Commandments. That is what is called God’s *revealed will*: what He has made known to us.

He tells in the Bible how He wants us to live – how we should act and speak and how we should think. For instance, He tells us that we should not have any other gods; that is the First Commandment. It will be for God’s glory to answer prayers that ask for what is consistent with His commandments. We should learn the commandments and what they mean.

But what about when we ask, for instance, that we would get a particular job? First, we should not ask for a position which involves doing what is sinful; that would be contrary to God’s revealed will. But how can we know whether it is according to God’s will to give us the job we have applied for?

We cannot know whether it is according to God's purposes to give us one position or another, or neither of them.

But God's purposes are part of His *secret will*. We cannot know His secret will until He makes that known in His providence. And that is why we should add, when we ask for particular things, "if it be Thy will". We should want to submit to God's will for us.

But, remember, God is good; He is willing to do good things for sinners. Especially He is ready to draw sinners to Himself, to convert them. But how can a holy God bring polluted sinners, whose hearts are full of sin, near to Himself? The answer is that He must take away the guilt of their sins, and He must remove the power of sin in their hearts and lives. Yes, He is able to do these things, but how can He do so and still be holy?

It is because "God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). And we should pray to God to forgive our sins, for Jesus' sake; and to make us holy, again for Jesus' sake. In the *Catechism*, the expression used instead of "for Jesus' sake" is "in the name of Christ". If we ask God, *in the name of Christ*, for what we need, we are praying that we may have it, *for Jesus' sake*.

It is because Christ died in the place of sinners, to reconcile them to God, that they can have the blessings they pray for. God's only begotten Son took a human nature into union with His eternal, Divine Person. When He was born, He was named Jesus and was bearing the sins of all the people who will ever believe on Him. He had to bear sin away, and He did so especially by dying on the cross in the place of the sinners who were to be forgiven. We are called to trust in Him, who died to bear sin away.

The next point in the *Catechism* answer about prayer is that we should ask for good things from God "with confession of our sins". We deserve nothing from God, except never-ending punishment because of our sins. Even God's children continue to sin while they are in this world. Only when they enter heaven will they perfect; only then will they be sinless.

Until then, they deserve nothing. Yet God gives good things to sinners; that is His kindness, His grace to sinners. But because they do not deserve anything good, they should acknowledge that they go on sinning.

At the very least they are coming short of the glory of God. They should be loving God with all their heart – that is, loving and obeying Him perfectly. But they do not love God or obey Him perfectly; so they need to confess that they are sinning in all kinds of ways.

The last point we make from this *Catechism* answer is the need for thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies. Even if it is another human being who shows us kindness, we ought to thank them for what they have

done. How much more, if God shows us kindness by answering our prayer, we should acknowledge His kindness by thanking Him for what He has done for us.

We should not move on unthankfully and fail to remember God, from whom “every good gift and every perfect gift” come. He is “the Father of lights” (James 1:17), the Creator of the sun, the moon and the stars – the lights in the heavens – which bring great blessings to people on earth. Whatever blessings we receive, whether they are for our bodies or our souls, we ought to thank God sincerely for them.

It is very common for ministers and others who pray in church to address God as their “Heavenly Father”. But why do you not hear that expression used in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland? When someone is praying out loud during public worship, we should understand that he is leading everyone else who is present. In other words, everyone else should feel free to take up the petitions of the man that is speaking out loud, and they should be repeating these petitions silently themselves.

Yet there are likely to be some people present who are not God’s children, who have never trusted in Christ; so God is not their Heavenly Father. And how is an unconverted person to take up a petition addressed to God as his or her Heavenly Father? It is impossible to do sincerely; God is not their Heavenly Father.

But believers have every right to think of God as their Heavenly Father and to speak to Him in that way. This is how believers should think about Him; He really is their Father, and He will treat them as their Father. He is able and willing to help them, no matter what their circumstances are.

That is how believers should think about God when they pray to Him. Jesus encourages them: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? (Matthew 7:11).

In the 1700s, a group of ministers and perhaps some other godly men had gathered together. One of the men was asked to pray who did not have much ability. He began but he did not get on well. He was finding his duty very difficult. He whispered to Andrew Fuller, a minister near him: “I do not know how to go on”.

Fuller whispered back: “Tell the Lord so”.

No one else heard either of the whispers, but the man took Fuller’s advice and began to confess that he did not know how to pray as he should. He then asked God to teach him. God did hear him and helped him to pray. We all need to ask God to teach us to pray. Apart from the teaching of God the Holy Spirit, we will never learn to pray in a way that is acceptable to God.

## To Trust in Mary or in Jesus?

A man who became a missionary in the province of Quebec in Canada was born in a Roman Catholic family. There all the teachings of the Church were strictly observed. When he was young, his mind was trained in the Roman faith. His whole life was directed by Roman Catholic ideas and he thought that all other religious teaching was heretical – that it was completely opposite to what Roman priests claimed was the true faith. He believed that his own Church was the one true Church everywhere, one that had come down from Jesus and His apostles.

In the first eight years of his education, the Church implanted all her false teaching in his young mind, and he never once doubted the Church until he was confronted with the true gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. He faithfully practised all the ordinances of the Church and became an “altar boy” at the age of 11.

He welcomed the opportunity to serve at two or three masses on some days. He believed that the mass is a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary and he considered it a privilege to take part in such a ceremony. But it was not a privilege. The idea that the mass is Christ’s sacrifice offered all over again is false. The Bible tells us that “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28). His sacrifice cannot be repeated. To try to do so is completely wrong.

The missionary describes how he feared the consequences of what Roman Catholics called “mortal sin” and how he once hurried to confession and found that the priest was away. The boy was terrified that, if he died without confessing his sins, he would go straight to hell.

Every day the whole family knelt together to recite the rosary – a set of beads strung together, with a prayer attached to each of them. And the Church of Rome teaches that “we often obtain more promptly what we ask by calling on the name of Mary than on that of Jesus”. Yet Mary has no power to hear prayer and she has no power to forgive sin. How foolish to look to Mary as someone who is more ready and more able to help people than the God-man Christ Jesus! There is no Saviour other than Jesus (see Acts 4:12); He hears prayer from every part of the world and He forgives sin.

The lad often went to bed afraid, and he would pray to Mary in his distress until he fell asleep. He had great faith in Mary and used to carry a medal of her around his neck. After his bicycle went through the ice, when he was riding it on a frozen lake, he was quite convinced that he owed his life to the medal of Mary that he wore. But the medal could do nothing for him.

One day a Protestant minister began to visit his home and began to teach

the family from the Holy Scriptures. The boy's father and his aunt and uncle stopped attending mass and tried to explain to the boy that there is a great contrast between the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of Rome. He was particularly impressed by Jeremiah 17.5: "Thus saith the Lord: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord".

The light penetrated through that verse to the depths of his soul and he saw that it was his own condition that was vividly described. He had been trusting in the priests of the Roman Church for his salvation. The teachings that were so diligently implanted into his mind from his earliest days were now completely removed by the power of the Spirit of God, and from that time his trust was in the Lord and in His Word.

He passed through times of trial, temptation and backsliding, but God did not forsake him. A few years later he was called to serve God as a minister of His Word among Roman Catholic people in Canada, which he described as one of the neediest mission fields in the world.

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## A Young Sailor and His Bible

It was 1822 and a ship arrived in London from Philadelphia after the crew had experienced many dangers on the voyage. After reaching London the ship was examined. It was condemned as not being seaworthy, and the crew were paid off. It probably never crossed the Atlantic again.

One of the crew was a lad of about 15, who wanted to get back to his home in America. Someone advised him to make his way to Liverpool, where he would probably be able to join the crew of another ship bound for America. So he left London and began his journey to Liverpool (more than 200 miles away) on foot.

He had almost no money, so he soon began to feel rather hungry. He had to sell all the articles he could spare in order to buy food. When he reached Stony Stratford, a village that is now part of Milton Keynes, he had no money left and nothing he was prepared to sell. As he was passing through the village, he had to ask for help from someone standing at a door.

The person asked, "What is that you have tied up in your handkerchief?"

The lad replied, "That is my Bible".

"Well, can't you sell that? It will help you on your journey."

"No," he said, "I will never part with my Bible, even if I sell everything else; for it was given me by a lady in Boston. And she advised me never to part with it, and I love to read it; so I won't part with it."

The person standing at the door must have given the boy something to eat that satisfied his hunger. Then he set off on another stretch of his long journey to Liverpool.

It was good that the boy so much valued his Bible. I hope that he reached Liverpool safely and found a ship whose crew he was able to join. Even more, I hope he found good for his soul through reading his Bible and that he could say sincerely: "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver" (Psalm 119:72).

I also wish that those who read this article will have the same love for God's Word as this young American sailor, and the same unwillingness to part with it. See that you ask God to bless to your soul what you read in the Bible and what you hear in the preaching of the good news of salvation that is to be found in it.

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## **John Welsh: a Man of Prayer**

### **6. Exiled from Scotland**

John Welsh was a noted minister in Ayr for five years. 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 – including John Forbes from Aberdeenshire – were arrested, taken to Edinburgh and sent to Blackness Castle. The presiding judge at the trial announced that all the judges had found the prisoners guilty of treason, though that was completely false. Last month's article told about this "Dishonest Trial".

**T**he prisoners were then permitted to address the jury themselves. Forbes spoke first and explained in detail all that had happened. Welsh spoke next. "Although our persons are not to be much regarded," he told the jury, they were, through God's mercy the servants of Jesus Christ, ambassadors of the great God, carrying the message of death and life, of salvation and condemnation, to the people; "and therefore, whatever shall be done to us, [God] shall account it as done to Himself."

By this speech, we are told, "the hearts of the jury and of all that were present were much moved", but what could plain, logical reasoning be expected to achieve, and even powerful appeals to the conscience, when the whole system was so corrupt? Hamilton, the Lord Advocate, even interrupted Welsh to tell the jury over again that their only business was to decide whether or not the accused had declined the authority of the Privy Council. And, after Welsh had finished, Hamilton again made dire threats

against the members of the jury if they did not bring in the verdict he was looking for.

For over six hours the jury considered their verdict in a room below the court. But, doubtless to see that they did their duty to the King, one of the judges was present — which was completely illegal. When it became clear that the jury would probably acquit the accused, their foreman and the judge returned to court to let them know which way the matter was likely to go. The jury was then further threatened, and promises were made that no harm would come either to the Church or to the prisoners.

By a majority of nine to six the jury at last returned a verdict of guilty. One jurymen, John Livingstone, declared that he not only acquitted the prisoners of treason, but owned them to be honest ministers of Christ and good subjects of the King. And two of the nine who condemned the ministers became deeply disturbed for their part in bringing in such an unjust verdict, and they only found peace after making confession of their sin.

When Elizabeth Welsh heard in Ayr that her husband was likely to be brought to trial she made her way to Blackness as quickly as possible. While the jury was considering their verdict she waited with the wives of the other ministers. And, when the verdict was announced, they thanked the Lord Jesus, who had given their husbands strength and courage to stand for His cause, before adding, “They were even treated as their Master was before them, judged and condemned under silence of night”.

Sentence on the prisoners was put off until the King had been consulted. The next day they returned to Blackness. They were accompanied as far as the Castle by six of their brethren, including the two Melvilles, who were respected ministers in the Church. It is James Melville who records the parting scene: “At Blackness, with thanksgivings, prayers and many tears, [various] brethren of the ministry left them, gladder and more confirmed in the cause than ever before, rejoicing greatly that God by this action had cleared the case to the knowledge and conscience of all men more than before”. Melville meant that these ministers understood better that the position of Welsh and others was the right one; this was how their consciences reacted.

Sustained as he was at this time by the grace of God, even although expecting the sentence of death, Welsh wrote to the Countess of Wigton, a thoroughly godly woman: “My desire to remain [in this world] is not great, knowing that so long as I am in this home of clay I am absent from God; and if [my life] were dissolved I look for a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . I long to eat of the fruit of that tree which is planted in the midst of the paradise of God, and to drink of the pure

river, clear as crystal, that runs through the street of the New Jerusalem” (See Revelation 2:7, 22:1).

In May, Welsh and Forbes were brought to Edinburgh Castle and for some months Welsh was able to enjoy easier conditions than in Blackness; possibly the reason for the easier conditions was that the governor of Edinburgh Castle at the time was his wife's cousin. Welsh had freedom to go where he wished within the Castle and could receive any visitors who came to him, his wife especially taking the opportunity to be with him.

After keeping Welsh and his five fellow-ministers waiting for over eight months in the expectation of being sentenced to death, the King at last declared his mind: they were to be brought to a court at Linlithgow and sentence [was] to be given out against the said traitors, to be banished out of Britain for the rest of their lives, upon pain of death. The sentence of banishment was duly passed against all six. Eight other ministers were banished at the same time, but without trial, to distant parts of Scotland, including the islands of Arran, Lewis, Orkney and Shetland.

The prisoners in Blackness were not in the end given the promised month to settle their affairs, but were rushed out of the kingdom after a fortnight, when they set sail for France. This was a country which endured much persecution, a persecution which eventually succeeded in almost wiping out the Protestant Church, but in 1606 the Church there was flourishing. Welsh and the others would have chosen France as most likely to offer opportunities for usefulness; after all, several Scottish ministers were already there before them as pastors or as teachers of theology. And there was the great blessing that the Church in France was organised on Presbyterian lines.

On the morning of 6 November 1606 they left their prison and arrived, along with their wives and some other close friends, at the pier in Leith, where a considerable crowd was waiting to bid them farewell. After Welsh had offered up an earnest, solemn prayer, they embarked in a small boat, which carried them out to the ship chartered by the Government to carry them to Bordeaux to begin their exile.

Because the captain was not ready to sail, the ministers had the opportunity to go ashore again. This saved them from an unpleasant evening when the wind rose, forcing the ship to run for shelter to the other side of the Firth of Forth. It was perhaps at some risk to his future comfort that John Murray, a local minister, entertained his brethren that evening, especially as he had already offended the bishops by his faithfulness.

When the wind dropped and became favourable for sailing, the ministers were called for. Even although it was now 2 am, an even larger crowd had gathered to see them off. Welsh again prayed, and from the boat he preached

what was to be his last sermon in Scotland, exhorting his hearers to hold fast the doctrine which he had taught. As the boat moved off into the dark night, the ministers sang Psalm 23 so “that both the courage and joy they had in God might be manifest to all”.

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*For Junior Readers*

## Happy Ned

Happy Ned lived in Liverpool nearly 200 years ago. But he was not always happy! When he was a child his parents left him to roam around the streets on his own. They did not teach him to pray; they did not take him to church; they did not even send him to school.

When he was old enough to work he got a job in a blacksmith’s forge. Sadly he got into bad company. When not at work he spent his free time in boxing fights. He was strong and muscular with big fists and could usually beat any man his own size, although often he was left looking bruised and battered. How sad!

But in the foundry where he worked, there were a few men who were of a different type. They were religious men who went to church on the Lord’s Day and who set an example of good behaviour in the workshop.

One Monday morning Ned overheard these men talking about what a good Sabbath they had enjoyed at the local chapel they attended. One of the men noticed Ned listening and spoke kindly to him. He invited Ned to go with them to the chapel the next Sabbath. After much persuasion he agreed to go, but as the day got closer he changed his mind. Yet when Sabbath came round, the man called for Ned and took him, for the very first time, to a place of worship.

Ned was totally bewildered and astonished. To see the congregation singing God’s praises together and praying solemnly to the great Jehovah was a sight so new to Ned that he seemed almost afraid. The whole service certainly made an impression on him. The good men who had brought him there asked him to come back again the next week.

On the Tuesday evening one of them persuaded Ned to go to a Bible class with him. Once again Ned felt impressed as he watched this smaller company of Christians also singing, praying and talking about the love of God and heavenly things. Soon he was going quite happily to the chapel and to the week meetings and listening carefully to all that was said.

It was at one of these meetings that the Lord first made Ned to feel the weight of his guilt. He was convinced of his sins, open sins he had committed

and also the secret sins of his thoughts that nobody else knew about. He felt weighed down by them. He was like David when he said, "Because gone up above my head / my great transgressions be; / and, as a weighty burden, they / too heavy are for me." He felt the sky over his head was black.

It was then that he began to cry to God for mercy. He went on attending the chapel, and he went on seeking the Lord. Then one night his cries for mercy were heard. He saw that God had pardoned all his sins for the sake of Christ and His finished work on Calvary, that "Christ died for the ungodly", that God had made Christ "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him". It was a night he would never forget, and he could not hide his joy!

Ned's conversion amazed everybody who knew him. Some of the men at work mocked him for his religion and thought he would soon return to his old ways, but God gave him grace to stand up against it all. He urged them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and told them that God could pardon them too and make them happy, and everybody else in Liverpool!

He learned to read and write and, before long, he began a new life as a missionary to the poorest and most neglected people in the town. He would get up at 5 am and spend the first hours of the day in prayer. He would ask God to help him that day in the work he had to do and to use him in doing good to those who had never heard the gospel.

He was friendly and cheerful and soon he became well known as he went around giving out tracts. And he spoke to people about Christ and the way of salvation. With the Lord's blessing, he was used to lead many people in Liverpool to know the Saviour. It was there that he was fondly remembered as Happy Ned!

*J van Kralingen*

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## **"Return unto Me" (3)**

*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*

This is the last part of a sermon from a 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. There were two main points in the last section: "All who have come to Christ are God's servants", and, "God will not forget the souls who have come to Christ".

*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.*

**4. A redeemed soul should return unto God:** “Return onto Me.” The sin and misery of every natural soul is in going away from God. Adam hid himself from the presence of God. So Isaiah complains: “They have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward”. And God says, “What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me?” “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.”

But when a soul has come to Christ, he has also returned to God. “Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.” Through Jesus, “we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” “I am the way . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”

Dear brethren in Christ [who are not as close to Christ as they might be], let me entreat you to return to the Father.

(1.) *Come into the arms of His love.* When God has redeemed a soul, He wants to have him in His arms; He wants to fall upon his neck and kiss him. See how He tries to win the soul back; He tells all that He has done for him; all that He will do. He adds, “Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee”. “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” Why do you hang back and will not venture nearer to God? Why do you not run to Him?

Some say, I am afraid of past sins. But hear His word: “I have blotted [them] out. “Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.” Some say, I am afraid He cannot wish such a sinful, weak thing as I beside Him! O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe His own word. Does He not speak plainly enough and kindly enough? “Return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee.”

(2.) *Come into communion with Him;* walk with Him daily. Enoch walked with God. Once Adam walked with God in the Garden of Eden, as easily, an old poet says, “as you may walk from one room to another”. He talked with Him about His judgements. Redeemed, forgiven soul, come to your God. Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace. Come to Him; do not rest short of Him. You think it a great thing to know a lively Christian; how infinitely better to know God! It is infinite blessedness. You will get more knowledge in one hour with God than in a whole lifetime spent with man. You will get more holiness from conversing with God than from all other means of grace put together. Indeed, the means are empty vanity unless you come to God in them. “Return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee.”

*To the backslider.* Guilty soul, you have been within the veil; you know the peace that Jesus gives; you know the joy of the smile of God. But you have left all this, and have gone away backward. Guilty soul, you have done worse than the world. Worldly people never served Christ as you have done. They have spit on Him, buffeted Him and crucified Him; but you have

wounded him in the house of His friends: "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance".

Guilty soul, what does God say to you? "Depart, thou cursed one?" No; "Return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee". Return, O backsliding daughter; "for I am married unto you". Return, sinner, your God calls you, the God that chose you, the Saviour that died for you, the Comforter that renewed you. "Return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee."

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## Going Home to the Good Shepherd

The children were very anxious to listen to their Aunt Margaret telling them a story. They wanted it to be a true story.

She began: "It happened many years ago, when I was quite young and lived with my sisters at home. There was a poor old woman who carried a basket with things to sell and used to come to our house once a week to get little dolls and pin cushions which we made for her."

One cold morning in November, someone told Margaret that old Jenny was at the door. It was a dull day, and the fog was wetting the pavement like rain.

Jenny had a little girl with her, about eight years old. She was such a little, pale, miserable-looking child with no shoes, nothing on her head, and her thin dress was soaked through. She looked so frightened.

Jenny explained that the girl had been found the night before, soaking wet and crying bitterly, on the doorstep of the house where Jenny lived. The girl would say nothing about herself, except that her name was Susan and that she had come from Glasgow and was looking for her aunt, but she did not know her name or anything about her.

The family in whose house Jenny lived were very poor, but they took pity on Susan and gave her something to eat. The next day, Jenny thought the best thing she could do was to take Susan with her when she went out with her basket, probably selling things like little dolls and pin cushions. She took Susan, and she called on families who, she thought, would show some kindness to the little girl.

Margaret spoke to the girl, and a few kind words had a wonderful effect in making her look brighter and more ready to speak. Susan now said that her mother had died and that her father often used to beat her; so she was glad to run away when he came into the house. Two days before she came to Margaret's door, he had put her on a coach and told her to look for her aunt in Edinburgh. As she was glad to get away from him, she came to

Edinburgh. After she had got off the coach, she wandered about till she sat down on the doorstep, suffering from cold and hunger.

Susan was given some clothes and was sent to school. Though the kind people who had taken her in were Roman Catholics, they did not object to her having a Bible and learning verses from it and coming every week to repeat them to Margaret. Though Susan was very ignorant, she was willing to learn.

Margaret could remember the first day she asked Susan if she knew what it was to be a sinner. But, for some unknown reason, Susan asked to be called a "Protestant"; yet she had no idea what either word meant.

The family who first took her in were too poor to keep her. A move to stay with a woman who had a shop did not work out. Then a Christian woman who heard about Susan offered to take her in as a maid, to do little jobs about the house. This woman treated her kindly and taught her about Jesus and about spiritual things. The years that Susan spent with this woman turned out to be the happiest part of her life.

Her health had already become poor before she came to Edinburgh, but she became more and more ill. Then another godly woman offered to care for her, if she was paid a small amount of money. This woman was not well herself and she had a young family, but she wanted to show kindness to Susan for God's sake. And money was found to help pay for Susan's food and some of her other needs.

The godly woman treated Susan as a mother would, and when Susan lay awake because she was frightened and was suffering pain, the woman would spend hours speaking to her about the love of Jesus to poor sinners, and about heaven as a place where pain and sickness will never be felt. She said it was wonderful how Susan's mind was opened to receive the truths of the Bible and the questions she would ask showed this too.

Margaret believed that these questions showed that she really was understanding what she was hearing about the teachings of the Bible. Margaret also believed that, in Susan's last days, she seemed to have the faith of a little child. All her fear of dying was taken away, and she seemed "quite happy to think of going home to the Good Shepherd".

The children were pleased with the story. Then their aunt said, "Now you must tell me what lessons you and I should learn" from Susan's story. There was silence for a little while before the oldest of the children said, "I suppose we ought to be very thankful that we have had kind parents and a comfortable home and have not been friendless and wanderers as she was".

That was true. *You* also should be thankful if you have been brought up by parents who love you, who do not abuse you but try to do what is best for

you. You should be very thankful to God if you have plenty to eat and drink and suitable clothes to wear and a nice house to live in. Of course, your parents are not perfect. That is impossible in this sinful world. But you should ask God's help to obey them and to follow the teachings of the Bible, including the Ten Commandments.

Especially you should seek the salvation of your soul. And how greatly you should value your spiritual privileges – for example: to have a Bible, to hear the preaching of God's Word and the call of the gospel. Most of all, you should value the fact that these privileges give you the opportunity to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you will be saved from your sins. If by God's grace, you do so believe on the Saviour, you will have every reason to be "happy to think of going home to Christ, the Good Shepherd". And all will be well for you when the time will come for you to die. What a blessing!

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## **“Will It Pay?”**

One warm afternoon in August, two students were sitting in their room in the college where they were studying. One of them, Henry Howard, said to his friend, from his rocking chair: "The great question of the age is, Stearns, Will it pay?" He added several examples: the farmer wants to know if it will pay to cultivate his fields; so too the doctor, the artist, the teacher and the politician ask themselves if it will be profitable for them to take on some more work.

Stearns was studying to become a minister, and Howard asked him: "Should you not ask yourself the same question: Will it pay?"

In fact, Howard went on, he had already done a calculation. He said, "I found that the business is a beggarly one. My father tried it before me. I have the light of his experience to go by. The fact of the matter is, [the ministry] will not pay; and that is the reason why so few young men can be found who are willing to take up the work.

"I remember the old manse at home, with its poorly-furnished rooms, its faded carpets, its empty pantry, its throng of company, and its troubled faces when large bills were presented for payment by men who had not, and would not, pay their proportion of my father's stipend. I remember how my mother and sisters had to remake my old coats and rob themselves of many necessities, and my brother of many articles of clothing, before I could be decently clad during my three years at college.

"I know how men can think that it is great humility for them to hear [a minister], without reflecting for a moment that it is their duty to pay for what

they receive. No, no, Stearns, you are a good-hearted fellow, and I would take your advice about most things. But I have seen it all, and I can't become a minister, much as I honour and esteem the profession. It will not pay.”

Stearns' eyes filled with tears and a sad expression came over his face, but for some time he said nothing. At last Stearns repeated slowly: “It will not pay, Henry Howard?” Then Stearns went on: “I too have made a calculation on this subject – on my knees before God. And I know that it will pay. I have the testimony of the apostles, martyrs and saints who have gone before me, that it does pay. I have the word of Jehovah Himself that it shall pay.

“And I have just read in my Bible a fearful curse pronounced against those who conclude, as I fear you have done, that godliness and preaching are poor things in this poor world. ‘Cursed be the man’, says the Prophet, ‘that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness’.

“By this we see that the worldly-minded are not always paid well, however much they might assume beforehand that they will be. I accept that in our country ministers are poorly paid in money, as a general rule. I know also that manse cupboards get empty and that old coats are well worn before they can be laid aside.

“But I know also that the minister need never worry about starving. He who fed the Israelites with manna for 40 years will not forget His servants today. He who clothes the lily of the valley will not forsake His ministers. They shall in the end have their pay in full measure, pressed down and running over. It shall come too when the dross of the earth, if weighed, will be found lighter than vanity. When the mists of time are dissolving in the sunlight of eternity – when the lip grows speechless and the eye becomes dim – then will the truth of what I have said be tested by God's faithful messengers. ‘He that winneth souls is wise.’

“When Edward Payson [a noted American minister] arrived at this point, he shouted, ‘Peace, peace, peace! Victory, victory! O if ministers only saw the inconceivable glory that is before them, and the preciousness of Christ, they would not be able to hold back from going about clapping their hands for joy and exclaiming, I am a minister of Christ!’ Payson found that the ministry will pay.

“The heavenly-minded Henry Martyn [a missionary to India and Iran] breathed out longingly, “When shall time give place to eternity? When shall the new heaven and the new earth appear? It was there he felt he would enjoy the reward of all his toil and faith and patience. He was quite sure of his pay.

“When David Brainerd [a missionary to Native Americans] supposed that he was dying and could hardly speak, someone very close to him heard him say, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Why is Thy chariot so long in coming?’ After some more time had passed, he said again, ‘He will come; He will not tarry. I shall soon be in glory. I shall soon glorify God with the angels.’ He felt that his pay would soon be certain and very great.

“It will not do for the young men of the present day to say that the ministry will not pay, and refuse to enter it. But when the last day comes, it will be found that it *has* paid. But ‘the fearful and unbelieving’ are for ever shut out of that city [heaven], whose foundations are ‘garnished with all manner of precious stones’.”

Howard’s face grew serious; he admitted that he could be wrong, that he had “only looked on the dark and earthly side of the picture”. He even said that “Stearns must be right” and that “the gospel ministry will pay”.

Adapted from *The Christian Treasury* for 1866

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For Younger Readers

## “Can’t God Count?”

A little girl and her brother were carrying a basket of cakes to their grandmother. They very much wanted to see what was in the basket, so they very carefully raised the cover over the basket and looked in.

When they saw the lovely cakes they really wanted to taste them. After counting them over several times, they almost made up their minds that they might eat just one of them. Nobody would know it, and it would taste so good.

While they were looking at the cakes, and just ready to take one, the little girl looked up at her brother’s face, and asked him, “Can’t God count?”

This settled the matter. The lid was shut down, and all the cakes were carried to Grandmother. And I think Grandmother would have given each of them a taste of a cake. Perhaps they were small cakes and Grandmother may have given each of them a whole cake.

Remember that God sees everything. He sees everything that you do. He sees everything wrong that you do. You must ask God to forgive you for all the wrong things that you do.

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## Fountain of Siloam

Beneath Moriah's rocky side  
A gentle fountain springs.  
Silent and soft its waters glide  
Like the peace the Spirit brings.

The thirsty Arab stoops to drink  
Of the cool and quiet wave;  
And the thirsty spirit stops to think  
Of Him who came to save.

Siloam is the fountain's name;  
It means "One sent from God",  
And thus the Holy Saviour's fame  
It gently spreads abroad.

O grant that I, like this sweet well,  
May Jesus' likeness bear,  
And spend my life, my all, to tell  
How full His mercies are.

*R M M'Cheyne*

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## Looking Around Us

### Are Elephants People?

This is the strange question that came before a United States court recently. An "animal rights" group had asked the court to rule that five elephants ought to be moved from a zoo in the state of Colorado to an elephant sanctuary. The group had argued that Missy, Kimba, Lucky, LouLou and Jambo were "imprisoned" at the zoo.

The Supreme Court in Colorado rejected the group's arguments because, it ruled, elephants are not people. The basic question, the Court stated, was "whether an elephant is a person", and so does it have the same rights to liberty as a human being?

To most people, the idea that elephants or other animals should be considered human and have the same rights as human beings must sound ridiculous. That is how most people think even if they pay no attention to the Bible and what it teaches. And at first sight many will be surprised to find that the Bible has something to say that will help to answer the question put

to the court in Colorado about the five elephants. The Bible will help us to think through many question that meet us, in all sorts of situations.

Let us turn to Genesis 1. On the sixth day of creation, God made “cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind” – all the land animals, including elephants. Then, on the same day, “God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness”. God is a spirit, and each human being has a spirit, or a soul. An elephant has no soul and, when it dies, that is its end; but human beings continue after death, because their souls will continue to exist, either in heaven or in hell. And their bodies and souls will be reunited at the end of the world, when the resurrection will take place.

The court in Colorado was right.

### **This Year’s Commonwealth Day Service**

A service took place at Westminster Abbey, in London, to mark this year’s Commonwealth Day. It takes place each year on the second Monday in March. This year it celebrated the Commonwealth’s “powerful influence for good in the world”.

Those present included King Charles III and the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal and Sir Keir Starmer, the British Prime Minister. Because 2025 is the eightieth anniversary of the end of World War II, the King paid tribute to the “sacrifice and selflessness” of Commonwealth forces during that conflict. He also said that restoring the “disrupted harmony of our entire planet” is the most “important” task facing humanity.

The purpose of a service should be to worship God, but there is no indication in the report on the BBC website that there was any element of worship in this “service”. But we are probably right to assume that there were some elements of worship. Yet were these elements of worship all addressed to the true God, the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture?

What we are told is that the “service” included performances by a “Hindu Scottish pipe band, and musicians, acrobats and singers from the Masai Cultural Arts team”. To remember, in a suitable way, the sacrifices made by soldiers and others is appropriate. But what was described as a service, yet was full of worldly performances, is very definitely another matter, especially when attended by leading men and women in the country. Let us pray that people of all kinds would come together to worship the true God sincerely in ways that He has prescribed – without these services being ruined by worldly entertainments.

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