

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

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Number 5

Are We Ready for Heaven?

Time and again, we are reminded of death. It may be a neighbour or someone further along the street who has passed away; it may be a relation, closer or more distant; it may be none of these. But everyone must die; each of us must pass into eternity. We do not know when; we do not know how. But this is certain: each one of us must, before very long, pass away from this world and be sent either to heaven or to hell.

So let us address the question at the top of this article. But first, what is *heaven*? It is where, especially, God is – although God is everywhere. Heaven is a place where everything is perfect, and so there is no sin there. Everyone there is perfectly happy; they will never be sad; there are no tears in heaven. Everyone there has everything they need; they will never be hungry or thirsty; they will never need anything for their souls.

Second, what is it to be *ready* for heaven? Let us remember that everyone who is born into the world is a sinner. So no one is ready for heaven unless they pass through some great change. Jesus put it like this: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

The Lord Jesus was emphasising what He was saying, by the double “*verily*”, or *truly*, at the beginning of the verse; it is so important for us to take in these words. To be born again is to be completely changed; it is a new beginning. The word *water* “speaks” of cleansing, or washing away, both the guilt and the power of sin. And the reference to *the Spirit* tells us that this is the work of God the Holy Spirit. We cannot enter the kingdom of God, over which Christ reigns, unless we are born again through the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

No one can enter heaven unless they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, unless they trust in Him as the One who died in the place of sinners, so that they may be saved. Jesus calls to every one 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). To look to Christ is to believe in Him; it is to see Him by faith – not in some vision in which we imagine we are looking at the human nature of

Jesus as He was in this world, or as He sits on His throne in heaven now. To look to Him is to trust in Him – as He is described in the Bible, doing all that is necessary for the salvation of sinners like ourselves.

For instance, we are told that “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). We are sinners; we are unjust, or unrighteous; we are the kind of people for whom Christ died. And He is calling each of us, with all the authority of a divine Person, to look to Him. John Duncan, a godly minister of the past, once said, “Jesus is a suitable Saviour for a lost sinner”. He was right. Jesus is the kind of Saviour we need. He is suitable for us all, for we are all lost sinners.

If we believe in Christ, He will bring us to God. If, by God’s grace, we believe in Christ, He will reconcile us to God; He will take away all the sin and guilt that keeps us away from God. And God will make us His friends; it is a friendship that will last for ever, a friendship that will never be broken.

Everyone who believes, who looks to Christ for salvation, will be saved. Yet no believer can go to heaven *as* they are in this world. In this world there is no perfection, and those who will enter heaven must be perfect. Since that is so, how can anyone enter heaven?

The answer is that at the very end of a believer’s life, the Holy Spirit finishes His work of sanctification. At that point, He makes the believer perfectly holy. So every believer will be welcomed to heaven when he or she dies. The Lord will say to them as they enter that place of never-ending happiness: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

One of the wonders of the salvation Christ has provided is that it is complete; it supplies *all* a sinner’s needs – all the needs of a sinner who looks to Christ by faith. If the Holy Spirit has begun a saving work in a soul, He will finish that work. Paul assured the believers in Philippi: “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6) – until the day of the resurrection, at the end of the world. Yes, it is a perfect salvation.

The question we now need to ask ourselves is: Am *I* ready to go to heaven? To answer this question you should consider what you most want in this world. Is it the things of this world? Is your heart set on enjoying yourself in the things of the world: in particular, in the entertainments that the world provides – in the films, for example, that you can watch on television or in a cinema or that you can download from the internet? Or is your heart set perhaps on getting a wonderful, high-paying job, or on buying one of the best houses in your community, or on driving a smart, powerful car?

Perhaps you say that what I have said exaggerates what you long for. Yet do the things, at the centre of your wishes, have to do entirely with this life – not the things of the soul? Have they nothing to do with holiness or finding the way to heaven which God has appointed. Then you need a new heart; you need to be made holy; you still need to look to Christ for salvation; *you are still on your way to a lost eternity.*

Or can you say that your greatest wish is to find Christ as your Saviour, to be made holy and to have all your sins forgiven – because of what Christ has done, and not through any good works that you may do yourself? Do you complain that your love to God is so small and that even your thoughts are full of sin? Do you realise that you need to go on looking to Christ, looking to Him by faith? And is that what you seek to do – by God's grace, not depending on any works of your own? If you can sincerely answer, Yes, to questions such as those in this paragraph, *you have good reason to believe that you are on your way to heaven.*

John Welsh: a Man of Prayer

7. Early Days in France

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 the King made it known that 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. They were found guilty in a dishonest trial and exiled to France, arriving in Bordeaux at the end of 1606.

A few weeks after arriving in Bordeaux, Welsh had begun to learn French. He did so, he said, “desiring and thirsting for no other thing under heaven, but that I may be fruitfully, with comfort, employed in [God's] work after the manner, and in the place and part where the only wise God has appointed and decreed that I may serve most for His honour in the advancement of His kingdom”. He added that he was “willing to submit to whatever state and condition might serve” to God's glory.

To be away from the scene of his previous success in the gospel must have brought its own sadness, besides a degree of home-sickness, especially till his wife and family arrived from Scotland six months later. And he lamented to Robert Boyd, another Scottish minister in France, over “my unprofitableness now, standing as it were idle, and the Master of the vineyard as yet not having hired me to work . . . here in this country”. And again: Preaching “is

my principal desire, and I should be content with mean things, food and raiment in great simplicity, with the liberty of such an opportunity”.

But within only 17 weeks of arriving in Bordeaux, Welsh was sufficiently fluent to be able to preach in French, “with some comfort and blessing”, he told Robert Boyd. Apparently in his exposition of the text and in preaching doctrine, Welsh’s French was excellent for a beginner, but when he turned to application, becoming more earnest and speaking faster, the accuracy with which he used the language became worse. His solution was to arrange with someone to stand up in his seat when he needed to take more care; he was anxious, not only to be Scriptural in what he had to put across to the people, but also to say it well.

Welsh visited La Rochelle for a meeting of the National Synod of the Reformed Church in France and met four of his fellow-exiles. It must also have given great satisfaction to Welsh to see at least 30 of his parishoners from Ayr arrive at La Rochelle during his stay there. It was a tremendous display of their respect and attention for so many of them to make what was then such a long and tedious journey. And before they left, they had a last sermon from their former minister, preached in the College of La Rochelle, a sermon which was attended by over 100 others; these included some Englishmen, and others who could understand English, among them some members of the Synod. Welsh’s visitors brought with them a pile of letters from his friends in Scotland, including “sundry faithful godly brethren” in the ministry.

Welsh hoped that his attendance at the Synod would lead to some opening for him to serve the Church in France, but nothing came of it. Yet he found peace in thinking of the supreme providence of God. Though obviously very disappointed, he was able to write, “When I look to my Lord I have full rest and contentment, and yet . . . I have not found that which I would have looked for”.

Yet it seems that, after he left La Rochelle, the Synod proposed that Welsh be appointed to the church of Pons, but for some reason now unknown he did not accept the offer. He was also at some stage offered the post of professor of theology at the college in Dijon, but he did not feel able to accept it. He was still waiting for his wife and family, and Dijon was too far from the coast. Besides, his health was still poor.

Welsh was considered for the chair of theology in La Rochelle, but it was another Scotsman who was appointed, possibly because the ecclesiastical authorities were afraid to offend King James, whom they regarded as a protector of Protestants. It is clear too that the English ambassador did his best to spread a view of Scottish Church affairs which was favourable to his

King, and this may have created a prejudice against Welsh. His ruling passion was that the Lord would open a door to him to preach Christ. He regarded preaching as his proper calling and gift, and he considered the teaching of theology as very much a secondary activity.

One reason for returning to Bordeaux was the expected arrival of his wife at any time; besides, there were opportunities for preaching – to the large numbers of Scots and English, probably seamen and traders who gathered in that port. When Welsh, who of course was not in the best of health, arrived back in Bordeaux he was completely exhausted. But as soon as possible he began to preach. Yet before another Sabbath came, he was unfit for preaching; he was in the hands of doctors.

Thinking About God's Judgement

C H Spurgeon

This article is taken with editing from Spurgeon's book, *We Endeavour*. It comes from a chapter on the words, "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16:2). He has spoken about those who have more than enough money for their needs. The sort of question that Spurgeon has been asking is, What have they done with the money they do not really need? He has insisted on the fact that we all will have to give in our account for everything we have done, especially at the Day of judgement. Spurgeon goes on to speak particularly about that Judgement:

I remind you that the account which you will have to render, and which I ask you to render now, is not an account about other people. How nice it would be if we had to do that, would it not? With what gusto some would undertake the task if they had to give in a report on other people's character!

How easily each of us can play the detective on people around us! How ready we are to say of this man: Yes, he gives away a great deal of money, but it is only for show. How ready we are to say of that woman: Yes, she appears to be a Christian, but you do not know her private life. How ready we are to say of that minister of the gospel: Yes, he is very zealous, but he makes a great thing out of his ministry.

We like in this way to reckon up our fellow creatures, and our arithmetic is wonderfully accurate – at least, so we think. Then when other people look at us according to the same rule, the arithmetic seems terribly out of order, and we cannot believe that it is right.

But at the great Judgement, we shall not be asked to give an account for others; neither will I now ask any of you to think about the conduct of others. What if others are worse than you are, does that make you the better, or the less guilty? What if others are not all they seem to be? Perhaps neither are

you. At any rate, their hypocrisy shall not make your pretence true. Judge yourselves, "that ye be not judged". Let each of us thrust the lancet into his own wound and see to the affairs of his own soul, for each one must give account of themselves to God.

Remember too that you are not called on to give an account to others. Sadly, there are many who seem to live only to win the respect of people around them. There is somebody to whom we look up; we think all is well if we only have that somebody's smile. There are some here who are broken-hearted because that smile has vanished; they have been misjudged and unjustly condemned. It is a small matter to be judged of man's judgement, and who is he that judges another man's servant? To his own master the servant shall stand or fall, and not to this interfering judge.

Remember also that the account to be given in will be from every man personally, *about himself*. And whatever another man's account may be, it will not affect him.

It was a rule of Pythagoras [an ancient Greek famous for his study of philosophy and maths] that each of his disciples should, every evening, give in a record of the actions of the day. I think it is well to do so, for we cannot too often look back on what has happened.

Sit down a while, pilgrim; sit down a while. Yonder is the milestone marked with the end of another year. Sit down on it; put your hand to your brow and think; lay your hand on your heart and search, to see what is there. There is no one who so dislikes to look into their account books as those who are bankrupt. Those who keep no such book are understood to be the worst of rogues when they come before the court.

There are those who keep nothing in their memory of what happened in the past; they bring up no recollections of their sins; they have tried to forget them all. But they may depend on it that they are deceiving themselves. If you dare not search your hearts I am afraid there is some reason for that fear and that, above all others, *you* ought to be diligent in this search.

For Junior Readers

What William Learned at Church (1)

William Kiffin lived in London in the 1600s. He was only 9 when the city was hit by a terrible plague which wiped out lots of people there. Although William was affected by the plague, he recovered. But sadly, both his parents died. Obviously this was very hard for the young boy, especially as his relatives were not very concerned to look after him, as was their duty.

At the age of 13 he began a job as a clerk for a firm in London. William did not find it pleasant working there and he was very unhappy. After about a year he decided to leave, even although he knew it was very serious for an apprentice to break his contract with his master. Very early one morning, before anyone was awake, he crept out of his lodgings. He was determined never to return.

He wandered aimlessly through the city, not sure what to do next. Then he was amazed to see large numbers of people flocking into a big church at this early hour of the morning.

As he had nothing else to do he followed them in. The godly minister, Thomas Foxley, was preaching. His subject that morning was the Fifth Commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother". He then went on to explain that the commandment also applied to the duties of servants to their masters.

William could not understand much of what was said, yet he thought the minister must know all about his running away and was speaking personally to him! So he decided he had better return to his master, and he hurried back to his lodgings. It was still so early that nobody had even missed him!

But he did not forget what he had heard and the whole experience made a deep impression on his mind. From this time on, he began to attend regularly the services of godly preachers.

J van Kralingen

A Chinese Girl's Prayer

This little girl was brought up in a Muslim family. She was only about eight, but she used to pray in the name of Jesus. Her grandfather used to beat her for doing so.

It was a time when bandits were going about their district of China, and a company of them had decided to live in a building that belonged to the grandfather. This put him in danger and made him afraid. So one day, when he was walking on the wall of the city and noticed these robbers in uniform coming back, he was very frightened.

The grandfather began to search in his mind for some source of help. Suddenly he thought about his little granddaughter. But what could she do to help in this very dangerous situation? He thought of her because she was someone who prayed to God. He could not think of anyone else he knew who could do anything for him. He had clearly no hope that his false religion could do him any good in this desperate situation,

He hurried home and found her. He shook her roughly to make her realise

the seriousness of the situation – whatever good he thought the rough shaking would do. Then he cried to her: “If ever you have prayed in your life, pray now. Those soldiers are coming back; I have seen them from the city wall. They will soon be here. You say God answers prayer. Go into that room and pray; pray that they will not come to our house.”

He then pushed the girl into an empty room and closed the door. The girl knelt down. Was she frightened, fearful, uncertain? Her mother was in an inner room and heard her as she poured out her heart to the Lord. She said, “Heavenly Father, I am so happy, so thankful, because my grandfather has told me to pray. Before, he has always beaten me or kicked me if I prayed and he was so angry, but now he has told me to pray. Heavenly Father, please show my grandfather that Thou dost answer prayer; please do not let the robbers come to our house, for Jesus’ sake.”

The soldiers entered the city and came marching down their street. The door of the grandfather’s house was open. He knew that it would be of no use to shut it; the soldiers would break it open anyway. The officer leading the soldiers drew up and turned his horse’s head to go towards the grandfather’s house.

Inside that house the girl was praying. Did God answer her prayer? Yes, He did. But what happened was perhaps the most unlikely thing possible. The horse refused to go inside. It kicked; it moved this way and that way; it went backwards, but nothing would make it go in. The officer beat it and dug his spurs into it but to no avail.

At last, superstitious fears overcame him; such fears were never far away, it seems, from Chinese people at that time. The officer turned to his men and told them: “This court is full of demons; we cannot see them; but the horse can”. Of course, that was nonsense. But he commanded all his men not to enter the house. He then turned his horse around and led his men to another part of the town.

What the horse saw or feared we do not know, but we do know that God is control of everything, and He is able to answer prayer in whatever way He chooses, no matter how young the person praying is.

A missionary in that city told that the grandfather came round to the mission house the next morning. When the missionary and the Muslim met, there were tears in the Muslim’s eyes. “To think,” the Muslim said, “that all the while that little granddaughter of mine was right, and I was wrong. Teach me about the God who answers prayer like that; teach me to pray.”

We may think that the behaviour of the horse was really wonderful – and it was. But far more wonderful was the grandfather’s reaction, especially if he went on to believe on the Lord Jesus. And it would be good for *us* all to

ask God to teach us to pray and to teach us about Himself – and to bring us to believe on the Lord Jesus.

For Younger Readers

God Answered at Once

Donald Mackay was a godly man in the north of Scotland. He used to bring his needs to God in prayer. It would be good if we would always tell God whenever anything goes wrong. It would be good to ask God to watch over us and help us always.

One day Donald was leading his pony with a load on its back over soft ground. The pony began to sink into the ground and it went on sinking. Donald knew that he could do nothing to get the pony out of the bog without help from someone else. So he went to pray to God. He asked God to send someone to help him.

Then he heard a man’s voice. The other man was asking, “What is the man doing here praying, and his horse sinking in the bog?”

Donald’s answer was, “You have come already, have you? Well, we will go and take him out.” Donald believed that the man had come because God had sent him, in answer to his prayer – that God sent the man to help him get the pony out of the bog. It was obvious to Donald that someone would help him with his pony. Donald was a man who trusted in God as One who answers prayer.

Yes, God answers prayer. But our first prayer should be: Lord, take away all my sin, for Jesus’ sake. And then let us pray for everything else that we need.

“What Will Become of Us?”

There was once a very gifted minister in Germany who, for a long time, preached the gospel with great energy, and many were converted. One of those who went to his church did not like the truths that he was hearing; so he stopped going.

One Sabbath morning, years later, this man decided that he would once more go to listen to the preaching of one he called, “the stern man”. He went and heard the minister speaking about the narrow way. He spoke of it

in a way that was neither narrower or wider than God made it in the Bible.

During the sermon, the visitor said to himself: "How is this? If what the man is saying is the truth, what will be the consequence?"

He could not get rid of the thought. Wherever he went, he heard the same words whispering in his mind: "Is it truth or falsehood?"

At last he thought of going to the preacher himself to ask him if he was convinced of the truth of what he had been saying. Away he went and asked the minister: "I was one of your hearers a short time ago, when you preached about the only way of salvation. You have disturbed my inward peace, and I cannot hold back from asking your solemnly, before God and upon your conscience, if you can prove your claims."

The minister replied very definitely that he had spoken the word of God, and so it was perfect truth.

"Is it so?" answered the visitor, "What will become of *us*?"

The minister latched onto the words, "of us". He was rather startled and he put away from his mind the word, "us". At once he began to explain the Bible teaching about the salvation of sinners and exhorted the visitor to repent and believe the gospel.

But his visitor answered as if he had not heard one word of what the minister had been saying. He asked, "If it is the truth, what shall we do?"

The preacher was now terrified. He asked himself: "*We*. What does this 'we' mean?" He tried to hide his uneasiness and confusion, as he began again to explain and exhort.

Again the visitor seemed to ignore what the minister was saying, and tears came to his eyes. He clapped his hands like someone in despair and cried out in a very loud voice: "Dear Sir, if it is the truth, then we are lost!"

The preacher stood pale and trembling; he could say nothing for a few moments. He looked down to the ground and amid his sobs he said, "My friend, down into the dust, and let us pray and wrestle" – not with each other, of course, but with God. They bent their knees; they prayed, and then the visitor left.

The minister went to his bedroom and locked himself in. The next Sabbath he was unwell and could not go to church. On the second Sabbath he was still unwell and again had to stay at home. On the third Sabbath he was back in church and began his sermon by telling the congregation that only now had he made his way through the narrow gate.

Some thoughts. 1. It is a dangerous thing to stop coming to church. God may leave those who do so to themselves; they may never again be willing to take an opportunity to listen to the gospel. They may be left to harden their hearts in unbelief and, solemnly, go on to a lost eternity.

2. We do not know anything further about the man who came to the minister. We hope he too entered the narrow way that leads to eternal life. But let us remember that to be awakened to a sense of sin, and of spiritual need in view of eternity, is very different from believing on Christ.

3. It is possible for a man to become a minister and to preach the truth without being converted.

4. What a blessing when the Lord convinces people of their lost condition, perhaps especially if they have been deceiving themselves that they were converted. This was what the minister believed had happened to him.

5. This highlights the need for those who profess to be believers to make their “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). They are to make sure their calling – their *effectual* calling (see *Shorter Catechism*, Answer 31) – and then their election. No one can be sure that they have been elected unless they have been called by God’s grace – unless they have believed in Christ.

6. How necessary it is to enter the narrow way – that is, to believe in Christ – if we are to be saved from sin and go to heaven at last!

7. Remember God’s authority. He has the right to call everyone who comes in contact with the teachings of the Bible to obey Him, especially to believe in His Son, the Saviour of sinners.

Children Walking in Truth (1)

J C Ryle

This is the first section of a sermon preached to children. It has been edited.

2 John 4. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth.*

The book from which my text is taken, is the shortest in the Bible. Look at it when you go home, and you will find it so. It has only 13 verses. But, short as it is, it is full of important things, and I think the verse I have just read is one of them.

This book is an Epistle, or Letter, written by the Apostle John. He wrote it to a good Christian lady whom he knew. This lady had children, and some of them were the children spoken of in the text.

It seems that John found some of this good lady’s children at a place where he happened to go; and you see how well he found them behaving. He was able to write a good report of them to their mother, and that is the report of our text: “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth”.

Now there are only two things I want to tell you about, out of this text. Some of you perhaps are thinking this very minute, What does walking in truth mean? Others perhaps are thinking, Why did John rejoice so greatly?

I shall try to answer these two questions: First, I shall try to show you when it can be said that children walk in truth. Second, I shall try to show you what the reasons were that made the Apostle John rejoice so greatly.

Children, let me ask you all one favour. Let me ask you all to try to pay attention. I shall not keep you long. Come then and listen to what I have to tell you. May the Holy Spirit open all your hearts and bless what I say.

1. I told you I would first try to show you this: ***When can it be said that children walk in truth?*** Let me set about it at once.

What does *walking* mean here? You must not think it means walking on our feet, as you have walked here tonight. It means rather our way of behaving, our way of living and going on. And shall I tell you why the Bible calls this “walking”? It calls it this, because everyone’s life is just like a journey. From the time of our birth to the time of our death, we are always moving on. Life is a journey from the cradle to the grave, and so a person’s way of living is often called his “walk”.

But what does *walking in truth* mean? It means walking in the ways of true Bible religion, and not in the bad ways of this evil world. The world, I am sorry to tell you, is full of false ideas and untruths, and specially full of untruths about religion. They all come from our great enemy, the devil. The devil deceived Adam and Eve in Eden and made them sin, by telling them a lie. He told them they would not die if they ate the forbidden fruit, and that was untrue.

The devil is always at the same work now. He is always trying to make men and women and children have false ideas about God and about religion. He persuades them to believe that what is really evil is good, and what is really good is evil – that God’s service is not pleasant and that sin will do them no great harm. And, I am sad to say, vast numbers of people are deceived by him, and believe these lies.

But those people who walk in truth are very different. They pay no attention to the false ideas about religion that there are in the world. They follow the true way which God shows us in the Bible. Whatever others may do, their chief desire is to please God and be His true servants. Now this was the character of the children spoken of in the text. John writes home to their mother, and says, “I found them walking in truth”.

Children, would you not like to know whether you are walking in truth yourselves? Would you like to know the marks by which you may find out? Listen, every one of you, while I try to set these marks before you in order. Let every boy and girl listen to what I am going to say.

(1) I tell you, for one thing, that children who walk in truth *know the truth about sin*. What is sin? To break any command of God is sin. If you do

anything that God says ought not to be done, that is sin. And God is very holy, and very pure; and every sin that is sinned displeases Him very much.

But, in spite of all this, most people in the world, both old and young, think very little about sin. Some try to make out they are not great sinners, and do not often break God's commandments. Others say that sin is not so terrible a thing after all, that God is not so particular and strict as ministers say He is. These are two great, dangerous mistakes.

Children who walk in truth think very differently. They have no such proud and high feelings. They feel themselves full of sin, and it makes them sad and humbles them. They believe that sin is the terrible thing which God hates. They look on sin as their greatest enemy and plague. They hate it more than anything on earth. There is nothing they so heartily desire to be free from as sin.

Children, this is the first mark of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. Do you hate sin?

Looking Around Us

God Is in Control

When Cyclone Alfred swept over Australia's east coast a few months ago, it also blew the Government's election plans off course. The Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, hoped to call a general election after learning of good news about interest rates. Instead he had to change his focus in reaction to the consequences of the disaster. It was, a Government Minister said, a decision taken from him by "an act of God", though he probably meant nothing more than that it was an event beyond human control.

The fact is that God is in control of everything. Cyclone Alfred was under His control. The time of the Australian election, now to be held at the beginning of May, was also under His control.

Governments almost always make their plans without asking for God's direction and blessing. Most of the time in countries like the United Kingdom, governments do not want to be seen acknowledging God in any way. At election times, the leaders of political parties promise that they will do great things: they will grow the economy; they will create lots of new jobs; people will be much better off; they will hold taxes down and bring welfare spending up. But when a party gets into power, they often find that they cannot keep their promises.

Indeed their promises may be impossible to keep. They did not seek God's blessing; they may not even believe that God exists. Yes, formal prayers are

read every day in the UK House of Commons, but how many MPs go before the Lord in prayer to plead for God's blessing on the nation? How many ask Him to direct the Government to make their decisions wisely and in the light of God's commandments?

No doubt there are a significant number of people throughout the UK (and in other countries, including Australia) who pray for their government, especially in times of crisis. And perhaps we should describe it as a crisis when a government is proposing to bring in ungodly laws. But we should see it as a judgement on a nation when its parliament is allowed to bring in such laws in spite of the prayers of God's people. Yet we should not think of such prayers as wasted; we should believe that the Most High will give an answer to these petitions in His own way and in His own time – in the way that will be most for His glory.

God's great purpose in this world is to build up His Church, to gather in all His chosen ones. That is why He sent His own Son into the world – to suffer and die in the place of sinners. God was in control of everything that happened in the life of Christ, including the events of Calvary. And He is in control of everything that happens in the history of the Church. It is He that calls men to the ministry to preach the gospel and who gives the Holy Spirit to apply the gospel message to sinners. So we should pray that He would provide ministers and pour out the Spirit to apply the preached Word.

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2024-25

Exercise 3

All answers from *overseas* should be sent to *Miss Naomi Clemence*, 60 Dougalston Gardens South, Milngavie, Glasgow, G62 6HT; naomi.clemence@gmail.com. The correctors should have your answers before the end of June. These exercises are based on 2 Chronicles 18 to Job 26, and Matthew 12 to Mark 16.

Senior Section (15 years old and over)

UK answers to *Mrs J Hicklin*, 22 Lasswade Road, Eskbank, EH22 3EF; jmhicklin86@gmail.com.

Old Testament

1. Read Nehemiah 1-2.

- (a) What news did Hanani bring to Nehemiah about Jerusalem? (3)
- (b) How did Nehemiah respond to the news? (3)
- (c) In his prayer,
 - (1) What does Nehemiah say about God? (2)
 - (2) What does he say about Israel? (1)
 - (3) What does he ask God to remember? (6)
- (d) What did the king ask Nehemiah, and why do you think it made him afraid? (2)
- (e) What did Nehemiah first do when the king asked what he wanted? (1)
- (f) What did he ask the king for? (see verses 5, 7-8) (4)
- (g) What else did the king give that Nehemiah had not asked for? (2)

- (h) How did Sanballat and Tobiah feel about Nehemiah coming, and why? (2)
- (i) What did Nehemiah do secretly after he had been in Jerusalem for 3 days? (2)
- (j) What did Nehemiah say to encourage the Jews to build the wall? (3)
- (k) Sanballat responded by laughing and accusing them of rebellion. How did Nehemiah reply? (1)

New Testament

1. Read Matthew 13:24-52.

- (a) In the parable of the wheat and tares what is represented by:
 - (1) The farmer (2) The enemy (3) The good seed
 - (4) The tares (5) The harvest (6) The reapers? (6)
- (b) Why would the farmer not let his servants root out the tares as soon as they were discovered? What do you think we can learn from this? (2)
- (c) What is the main lesson of the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven? (2)
- (d) In your own words explain the parable of the treasure in the field (3)
- (e) What do you think this parable teaches us about the value of belonging to God's kingdom? (2)
- (f) Read the parable about the net. What other parable in this chapter do you think is most similar to this one, and why? (3)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 102 in the Shorter Catechism: What do we pray for in the second petition [of the Lord's Prayer]? (3)

Intermediate Section (13 and 14 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Munro, 3 Borve, Isle of Harris, HS3 3HT; morag.rothach@hotmail.co.uk.*

Old Testament

- 1. Read 2 Chronicles 22:8-12.
 - Describe the events which led up to Joash being hidden. (4)
- 2. Read 2 Chronicles 23:1-17.
 - (a) What did Athaliah do when she heard that Joash was made King? (2)
 - (b) What happened to her? (1)
 - (c) What was included in the covenant that Jehoida the priest made between him, the people and the King? (3)
- 3. Read 2 Chronicles 24.
 - (a) How old was Joash when he became King? (1)
 - (b) How did Joash act "in the sight of the Lord"? (2)
 - (c) How long did he reign? (1)
 - (d) Joash wanted to repair the house of God. What steps did he take to gather resources for this? (3)
 - (e) How successful was the collection? (1)
 - (f) What was done with the money which was collected? (3)
 - (g) What was done with the money that was left over after the repair to God's house was finished? (2)

New Testament

- 1. Read Matthew 14:1-12.
 - (a) Who did Herod think Jesus was, and why did he think this? (3)
 - (b) Why did Herod imprison John the Baptist? (2)
 - (c) What stopped Herod from putting John to death? (2)
 - (d) Explain what happened on Herod's birthday. (4)
- 2. Read Matthew 17:1-13.
 - (a) Describe the appearance of Jesus as seen by Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. (2)
 - (b) Who appeared with Jesus and spoke with Him? (2)
 - (c) What suggestion did Peter make? (2)
 - (d) A bright cloud overshadowed them. What did the voice from the cloud say? (2)
 - (e) What was the disciples' reaction? (2)

- (f) Who did they see when they recovered? (1)
 (g) What did Jesus teach them about Elias (Elijah) coming first? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 24 in the Shorter Catechism:
 How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet? (3)

Junior Section (11 and 12 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Logan, 21 Leys Drive, Inverness, IV2 3JB; moira.logan@btinternet.com.*

Old Testament

1. The answers to these questions about Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah are in 2 Chronicles chapters 26 to 29.

- (a) Which of them became a leper because he had sinned? (end of chapter 26) (1)
 (b) Why did this happen to him? (1)
 (c) Why was it wrong for him to do what he did? (1)
 (d) Which king sacrificed to the gods of Damascus? (end of chapter 28) (1)
 (e) Which king ordered the temple to be cleansed? (chapter 29:1-16) (1)
 (f) Where did the Levites put the uncleanness after it was taken from the temple? (1)
 (g) Which king had a mother called Jerushah? (chapter 27) (1)
 (h) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Hosea were prophets. Which two prophesied during the reigns of these four kings? (Look up chapter 1 verse 1 of each book to find out) (2)

2. Read the book of Esther chapters 1-7.

- (a) Why was king Ahasuerus angry with queen Vashti? (middle of chapter 1) (1)
 (b) Who replaced her as queen? (chapter 2) (1)
 (c) What relation was Mordecai to the new queen? (beginning of chapter 2) (1)
 (d) Why was Haman angry with Mordecai? (beginning of chapter 3) (1)
 (e) What caused Mordecai to become extremely sad? (chapter 3:8 to chapter 4:1) (1)
 (f) What did Mordecai ask Esther to do? (middle of chapter 4) (1)
 (g) What eventually happened to Haman? (chapter 7) (1)

New Testament

1. In Mark chapters 1,2,3 and 5 we read about Jesus' miracles of healing on the following people

The man with the unclean spirit	Mark 1:23-26
Simon's mother-in-law	Mark 1:30-31
The man who was sick of the palsy	Mark 2:3-12
The man with the withered hand	Mark 3:1-5
Jairus' daughter	Mark 5:40-43.

Complete the table below, putting each person under the correct heading. (5)

Healed by the power of Jesus' word only	Healed by the power of Jesus' touch only	Healed by the power of both Jesus' word and touch

2. Read the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30.

- (a) When did the enemy sow the tares? (1)
 (b) Why were the servants not allowed to gather up the tares? (1)
 (c) When would the wheat be separated from the tares? (1)

Later in the chapter, we read the explanation of the parable.

- (d) Who is the enemy? (1)
- (e) Who are the tares? (1)
- (f) Who is referred to as the wheat? (1)
- (g) What is the field? (1)
- (h) What is the harvest? (1)
- (i) Who are the reapers? (1)
- (j) What is to happen to the tares and to the wheat at the end of this world? (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write out from memory the answer to Question 56 in the Shorter Catechism:

What is the reason annexed to the third commandment? (3)

Upper Primary Section (9 and 10 years old)

UK answers to *Mrs M Schouten, 58 Fairfield Road, Inverness, IV3 5QW.*
mary.schouten59@gmail.com.

Old Testament

1. Read 2 Chronicles 30:1-6 and 10-12, telling about King Hezekiah's invitation.
 - (a) Who was invited? (1)
 - (b) What special event were they invited to? (1)
 - (c) Where had they to come? (1)
 - (d) Who accepted the invitation? (1)
2. Read 2 Chronicles 32:1, 6-8, 21-23.
 - (a) Which King came to fight against Judah? (1)
 - (b) Write out the verse which tells us that Hezekiah looked to God for help. (1)
 - (c) What happened to the enemy King and to his army? (2)
3. Read 2 Chronicles 32:33, 33:20,25 and match the following names to their relationship to King Hezekiah.

Manasseh.	Grandson.
Amon	Great grandson.
Josiah	Son

(3)

New Testament

1. Read Matthew 11:28-30.
 - (a) Who are invited to come to Christ? (1)
 - (b) What is Christ's promise to those who come? (1)
2. Read Matthew 22:1-10. (The wedding invitations have been sent out and now the time has come for the invited guests to be called to the wedding.)
 - (a) How did the guests in verses 3 and 5 respond to the call? (2)
 - (b) Where were the willing guests found? (1)
3. Read Mark 1:16-20.
 - Name the four men who obeyed Christ's call to follow Him. (2)
4. Read Mark 8:34-38. Fill in the blanks with the words "lose" or "gain".
 - We can ——— even the whole world in this life but ——— our souls.
 - We can ——— out in this life but ——— everlasting life for our souls. (2)

Memory Exercise

Learn by heart and write down the answer to Question 31 in the Shorter Catechism:

What is effectual calling? (2)

Lower Primary Section (8 years old and under)

UK answers to *Mrs A MacLean, 12 Craigs Crescent, Edinburgh, EH12 8HT.*
mrs.a.maclea@proton.me.

Old Testament

The children of Israel behaved just like the heathen people around them and polluted the house of God. Write each missing word (choose from the list):

build words Babylon joy house

1. The children of Israel mocked the messengers of God, and despised his _____. 2 Chronicles 36:16
 2. God gave them into the hands of the Chaldeans, who burnt the _____ of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 36:19
 3. Those still alive were carried away to _____. 2 Chronicles 36:20
 4. After seventy years, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia. He invited the children of Israel to go up to Jerusalem to _____ the house of the Lord. Ezra 1:3
 5. When the house of God was finished, they kept the Passover and feast of unleavened bread with _____. Ezra 6:22
- After these things, Ezra went up from Babylon to Jerusalem with some of the children of Israel, bringing silver and gold and vessels for God's house. The journey would take four months. Write each missing word (choose from list):

delivered way head fell

6. They had no soldiers or horsemen to protect them. They camped by the river of Ahava and fasted, asking God for a right _____ for them and their little ones. Ezra 8:21
7. God heard them. He _____ them from the hand of the enemy and from those that lay in wait along the way. Ezra 8:31
8. Ezra was astonished when he learned some of the children of Israel had taken of the sons and daughters of the people around them, whom God had forbidden them to marry (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). He _____ on his knees and spread out his hands to the Lord. Ezra 9:5
9. He prayed, "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our _____, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens". Ezra 9:6

New Testament

In Mark chapter 9 we read about a boy with a dumb and deaf spirit. Write in each missing word:

1. The boy's father told Jesus how the spirit troubled his child and said, "Have compassion on us, and _____ us." Mark 9:22
2. Jesus said, "If thou canst _____, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 9:23
3. Straightway the father cried out, and said with tears, "Lord I believe; help thou mine _____." Mark 9:24
4. Jesus rebuked the spirit and it came out of the boy. Jesus took the boy by the _____ and lifted him up, and he arose. Mark 9:27

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