

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

June 2025

Number 6

Satan Trying to Blind Sinners

We live in very dangerous world. I am not thinking of the danger of war, or disease, or a serious accident, or anything of that nature. What I am thinking about is the danger we are all in from Satan, especially if we are still unconverted. The Bible speaks of him as “a roaring lion” who goes about “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8); he wants to do people spiritual harm. A lion, obviously, is dangerous. No one wants to meet a hungry lion; if that happens, the person is likely to be devoured. Similarly we are in danger from Satan; he wants to keep unconverted people in his kingdom and to bring them down at last to hell – to be with himself and his angels for ever (see Matthew 25:41).

Except for God's protecting power, he would also devour those who have been converted, those who are God's children. But He has promised to take care of them, and He will. Yet Satan will try very hard to tempt God's children to sin. He wants to bring them into serious sin and to damage their souls. How much they need to look to God to protect them and to pray that He would do so, and that He would never leave them to themselves! They ought to pray about these things, and God hears such prayers. While Satan is far stronger than they are, God is infinitely stronger than Satan. The all-powerful God *will* keep them safe.

We also read in the Bible that “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). It is Satan that is here described as “the god of this world”. Charles Hodge says that he is so described “because of the power which he exercises over the men of the world and because of the servile [like slaves] obedience which they render to him. They ‘are taken captive by him at his will’ (2 Timothy 2:26).” Hodge also points out that people serve Satan though they do not mean to do so. “It is enough that he actually controls them.”

Let us notice the dangerous nature of the work that Satan is engaged in when he is blinding the minds of those who do not believe. He is doing this, Paul is telling the Church in Corinth, to prevent the light of the gospel – a

glorious message – from penetrating into the dark minds of unbelievers. How dangerous for those who are being blinded! They may lose their souls as a result.

Let us also notice *how* Satan blinds the minds of the unconverted so that they do not follow these various teachings of the Word of God. Remember, Satan's work is highly dangerous and we should seek God's protection so that we do not fall victim to it.

1. God's Word tells us that "it is *an evil thing and bitter*, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (Jeremiah 2:19). This was originally directed to the Jews of Jeremiah's time, just before they were taken away to captivity in Babylon because of their sins. Most of them had forsaken the true God and had gone after false gods and were worshipping idols.

Their sins were evil and the consequences of their sins were bitter. How bitter an experience to be taken away from their own country and to spend perhaps the rest of their lives in a foreign country as captives! When people have forsaken the worship of God today, the Bible – or what is stored of it in their memories – is telling them that they have committed serious sin and that the consequences will be bitter, especially if they do not turn back but go on in sin till they die and pass into a lost eternity.

But Satan blinds such people's eyes, telling them what is not true – putting into their minds such ideas as: It will not be as bad as that and, in any case, you have plenty time to find the way to heaven.

2. The Bible warns us that "the wages of sin is death". These words are warning us especially about *eternal death*, in hell. Again Satan will whisper, Sin is not as serious as that; why should people be punished for ever, just because they have made a few mistakes? But sin is serious; it *does* deserve eternal death. We do not make just a few mistakes; we are sinning all the time, and it is a particularly serious sin to reject the salvation that the glorious Saviour is setting before us.

Yet Satan is trying to blind sinners to the seriousness of sin. Sin is serious because it is committed against the infinite, holy God. We must not think that sin is trivial, as Satan would have us believe. Remember what Jesus said about Satan: "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). Satan's murderous aim in telling such lies is to bring sinners down to hell.

3. Scripture teaches us that "we must all appear before *the judgement seat of Christ*; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). As he blinds people's minds, Satan may tell them that the judgement is a long time away and encourage them to enjoy themselves in sin till death is coming

really close, or even to go on in sin just a day at a time. But death may not be far away, and as death finds us, so will the judgement.

4. Satan wishes to keep people in darkness about *the reality of hell*. The Bible says that it is “the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 13), but Satan does his utmost to blind people’s minds to that solemn truth. He does all he can to stop them thinking about it. Yet God, in His mercy, warns us about it, so that we would “flee from the wrath to come” (Matthew 3:7).

5. The Bible warns about *the shortness of time*. David confesses to God: “Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth” (Psalm 39:5) – a very small distance. David lived for 70 years. It may seem a long life, but how short a time it was in comparison with the period that David has already been in eternity – more than 40 times as long as his lifetime!

Satan would certainly want young people to think that the age of 70 is a long time away. But time passes very quickly, especially as one gets older. You ought to make the best possible use of the time that is left to you in this world by seeking the Lord seriously *now*, in case death comes to you unexpectedly, which it may do at any time.

6. Satan wants to blind people to *the real nature of God*. For instance, God reveals Himself as “good and upright” (Psalm 25:8), telling us that He is kind and right in all that He does. But Satan tries to persuade people that God is neither good or right.

But He *is* good to us, especially in sending salvation to unworthy sinners like us, and that salvation has been provided in righteousness, for God is upright. When Christ, in His kindness, died in the place of sinners, He made a righteous provision for sin to be pardoned. So, when sinners believe in Jesus, their sins are all righteously forgiven. Surely we should believe God rather than Satan. God is exactly what He has revealed Himself to be, in the Bible, in spite of how Satan tries to blind those who are still unbelieving, making them reject the teaching of Scripture. He assures all who hear the gospel: “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

7. Again, Satan tries to blind people so that they will not believe that *salvation is possible*. Satan blinds them to the willingness of God to save such sinners as they are. But Christ says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Satan questions this; he says that Christ is unwilling to save; he tells the sinner that Christ is not able to save so bad a person, that they need to make themselves better first. But this is all lies. Do not believe him. But believe everything the Bible tells you, and all that Christ tells you. It is all perfect truth. If you trust in Him, you will be saved for ever. God will be with you in this world, and at last He will bring you to eternal glory.

Children Walking in Truth (2)

J C Ryle

This is another section of a sermon preached to children. It has been edited. Ryle's first point was, "When can it be said that children walk in truth?" The first part of that point was, "Children who walk in truth know the truth about sin. We now come to the second part of that first point.

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

(2) I tell you, for another thing, that children who walk in truth *love the true Saviour of sinners and follow Him*. There are few men and women who do not feel they need in some way to be saved [though this may be less true in 2025 than it was in the 1800s]. They feel that, after death, comes the judgement, and they would like to be saved from that awful judgement.

But, sadly, few of them see that the Bible says there is only one Saviour, Jesus Christ. And few go to Jesus Christ and ask Him to save them. They trust rather to their own prayers, or their own repentance, or their own church-going, or their own regular attendance at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or their own goodness, or something of that kind. But these things, although useful in their own place, cannot save any soul from hell. These are false ways of salvation. They cannot put away sin. They are not Christ.

Nothing can save you or me but Jesus Christ, who died for sinners on the cross. Only those who trust entirely to Him have their sins forgiven; only they will go to heaven. Only they will find they have an Almighty Friend on the Day of judgement. This is the true way to be saved.

Children who walk in truth have learned all this, and if you ask them what they put their trust in, they will answer, "Nothing but Christ". They remember His gracious words: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not". They try to follow Jesus, as the lambs follow the Good Shepherd. And they love Him, because they read in the Bible that He loved sinners, and gave Himself for them.

Children, this is the second mark of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. Do you love Christ?

(3) I tell you, for a third thing, that children who walk in truth *serve God with a true heart*. You may say you know it is very possible to serve God with outward service only. Many do so. They will put on a serious face, and pretend to be serious, while they do not feel it. They will say beautiful prayers with their lips, and yet not mean what they say. They will sit in their places at church every Sabbath, and yet be thinking of other things all the time – and such service is only outward service, and it is very wrong only to serve God outwardly.

Bad children, I am sorry to say, are often guilty of this sin. They will say their prayers regularly, when their parents make them – but not otherwise. They will seem to listen in church when the minister is looking at them but not at other times. Then their hearts are far away.

Children who walk in truth are not like this. They have another spirit in them. They wish to be honest in all they do with God, and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. When they pray, they try to be in earnest, and mean all the words they say. When they go to church, they try to be really serious and to give their minds to what they hear. And it is one of their chief troubles that they cannot serve God more heartily than they do.

Little children, this is the third mark of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. Is your heart false or true?

(4) I tell you, for a last thing, that children who walk in truth *really try to do things right and true in the sight of God.*

God has told us very plainly what He thinks is right. Nobody can mistake this who reads the Bible with an honest heart. But it is sad to see how few men and women care for pleasing God. Many break His commandments continually and seem to think nothing of it. Some will tell lies and swear and quarrel and cheat and steal. Others use bad words, break the Sabbath, never pray to God at all, never read their Bibles. Others are unkind to their relations, or idle, or gluttonous, or bad-tempered, or selfish. And whatever people may choose to think, all these things are very wicked and displeasing to the holy God.

Children who walk in truth are always trying to keep clear of bad ways. They take no pleasure in sinful things of any kind, and they dislike the company of those who do them. Their great wish is to be like Jesus – holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. They try to be kind, gentle, obliging, obedient, honest, truthful and good, in all their ways. It makes them sad that they are not more holy than they are.

Little children, this is the last mark I shall give you of walking in truth. Look at it. Think of it. Are your doings right or wrong?

Children, you have now heard some marks of walking in truth. I have tried to set them plainly before you. I hope you have understood them. Knowing the truth about sin; loving the true Saviour, Jesus Christ; serving God with a true heart; doing the things that are true and right in the sight of God. There they are, all four together. Think about them, I plead with you, and let each one of you ask yourself this question: What am I doing at this very time: am I walking in truth?

I can be sure that many boys and girls here know well what answer they ought to give. And God knows too, for He sees your hearts as plainly as I

see your faces this minute. Children, the all-seeing God sends you a question this night by my mouth: He says, Are you walking in truth?

Why should you not? Thousands of dear children have walked in truth already, and found it pleasant. The way was trodden by many little feet before your own. Thousands of boys and girls are walking in truth at this moment, and yet there is room. Dear children, think this night, Why should you not walk in truth?

For Junior Readers

What William Learned at Church (2)

William Kiffin lived in London in the 1600s. He started work when he was just 13, but he did not like it. He ran away and followed a crowd of people into a church. There he found out, from the minister's sermon, that he had done wrong in running away. From another sermon he learned he was a sinner.

William went back to the same church and heard another godly minister called Mr Norton preaching on the text, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked". This minister showed clearly what true peace is and that no one could ever have it without believing in Christ. This sermon also made a great impression on William.

Here he was, a boy of only 15, feeling himself to be a sinner. Indeed he felt more and more sinful, yet he thought he could not pray properly and could not believe in Jesus Christ. So he felt that the only thing he could do was to attend the most powerful and faithful preaching that he could find. This he did diligently and found some relief when he heard that he might obtain mercy in spite of his sinful state.

Another sermon that was very helpful to him was on the precious text, "The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin". The minister spoke about the wonderful power of, both to pardon sin and to cleanse from it. (*The blood of Christ* points us to His death.)

William wrote later that this sermon very much satisfied his soul. He added, "I thought I found my heart gently to close with the riches and freeness of grace, which God held forth to poor sinners in Jesus Christ. I found my fears to vanish, and my heart filled with love to Jesus Christ."

William also received comfort from another sermon. He said that the minister showed that Jesus Christ had great power and ability to save His people. He went on: "My faith was very much strengthened in the fullness of what Jesus Christ had done to satisfy God the Father for poor sinners". And William was made able to believe that Christ had died for him.

At his work William now found out that there were a few other apprentices who, like himself, were deeply concerned about the things of God. They would meet together early in the morning, at 5 am, to speak together about their souls' concerns and about the Lord Jesus. They also read the Scriptures and prayed together. They would then attend a 6 o'clock service at a nearby church before starting work.

What wonderful days these were when young apprentices without much education would spend their precious spare time with one desire – to find out more about Christ and His gospel! This seems to have been the key to William Kiffin's life: his love of the Word of God and his desire to follow it whatever that cost.

He later began to preach and became a minister himself. He endured many trials and also persecution for his faith. But he lived until he was 85, a long life for those days. Before he died, he left an account of the Lord's goodness to him from his youth, for the benefit of his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

He ended by saying something like this: "I wish the Lord to bless you, above all praying for you that you might in a special manner look after the needs of your souls. To know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life. Try to be diligent, to seek after the great teachings of the gospel and to be established in them. This is absolutely necessary for salvation. There is no sure foundation for the rest and peace of your soul but in Jesus Christ only. To His grace I commend you. Amen."

Is that not good advice for you also?

J van Kralingen

John Welsh: a Man of Prayer

8. "Some Blessing on Small Beginnings"

John Welsh was a noted minister in Ayr for five years, but he was expelled from Scotland for his faithfulness to Christ when King James VI was trying to mould the Church according to his own unscriptural ideas. He arrived in Bordeaux, in France, at the end of 1606. There Welsh learned sufficient French to be able to preach, but he had not yet been offered a suitable permanent position. In addition he was unwell and was still waiting for his wife and family to arrive from Scotland.

Welsh was lonely, and doubtless concerned that his wife had not yet come, several weeks after he expected her to arrive. He confided to his friend Robert Boyd his longing for death and went on: "But the Lord's appointed time is the best, the which, with patience and contentment, I would wait, having this for my consolation: first, that it pleased my God to put me

in His service . . . and still more, that it is His cross that I bear for His crown and kingdom”.

News from Scotland added to his sadness: Andrew Melville had been removed from his university post in St Andrews, and the bishops were carrying everything before them. Then, six months after Welsh had left Scotland, a ship sailed into Bordeaux harbour carrying his wife and children. Her husband wrote about her reaction to the troubles they had to face as a family: “I thank my God she bears the cross with comfort and contentment, the which unto me is no small comfort.”

Before long, Welsh felt much better and was able to restart preaching. In July 1608 Welsh was appointed minister of Jonsac, a small town near Bordeaux. He was inducted there towards the close of the year. Welsh does not seem to have been happy in Jonsac, though he did write soon after going there: “I thank my God in Jesus Christ, who has made me to find mercy, and has not only opened the door, but also has poured some blessing upon the small beginnings”. It was at first a temporary appointment, but the next year the provincial Synod, against Welsh’s wishes, made it permanent. Welsh appealed against the decision of the provincial synod to the National Synod, who, without reversing the decision, did ask the lower courts to provide him another charge if he was still unhappy in Jonsac.

But his reputation in France was increasing, even although he had to preach in what was to him a foreign tongue. Comment was passed on Welsh’s boldness and authority when preaching before the University of Sedan, where Andrew Melville was now a professor. It was a learned congregation, but Welsh addressed them in the same way as he would have preached to an ordinary gathering in Selkirk or Ayr. Welsh asked, “How can I take into account, or fear, the face of man when I reflect, and consider myself, as standing in the presence of that holy and gracious Majesty, whose Word I declare, under His eye, to His servants and creatures?”

Welsh was very anxious to move from Jonsac. None of the family enjoyed good health there, perhaps due to the miserable accommodation provided for them. But no one bothered to get them somewhere better to live. Nor was he paid properly.

He told Boyd, “I know it is the hand of the Almighty. The cup is bitter, but I trust the fruit will be sweeter. . . . My soul is consumed and withered, but the Lord will send deliverance when it shall please Him. . . . You will pity my sorrows and recommend them unto Him who is the God of consolation and knows how to comfort the abject and humble.” And two months later: “Besides many sad things within, I have to bear much from without, from the ingratitude of this people with whom I am, and whom I

have served, and whom I think I shall be constrained to leave". He was looking for the opening of a door elsewhere, to a congregation where he would be in a better position to advance the kingdom of God.

Although he felt so strongly about the treatment he was receiving in Jonsac, Welsh did not give up. In 1612 he published a book in French, entitled, *The Armageddon of the Apocalyptic Babylon*. His purpose was, in his own words, "to consider the resemblance between the Romish Church and the figures divinely appointed to symbolise her, and to make known her character. She is symbolised by a city and a great city, by Sodom, by Egypt, by the place where Christ was crucified, and by Babylon." Welsh complained about the mistakes made by the printer, but it was said that the author's use of the French language was excellent.

It was possibly also while Welsh was the minister of Jonsac that a friar, unable to find lodgings in the village, came to Welsh's door. It was late, but he was taken in, given something to eat and shown to bed. When the friar wakened up in the middle of the night, he heard a quiet, but continuous, whispering noise coming from the other side of the wooden partition. The next morning the friar met a local man as he walked through the fields. The friar told him that he had stayed with the Protestant minister. And, in answer to a question about how he was looked after, he said, "Very bad, for I always held there were devils haunting these ministers' houses, and I am persuaded there was one with me this night, for I heard a continual whisper all the night over, which I believe was no other thing but the minister and the devil conversing together."

The man explained that the minister would have been praying to God, and added that Welsh prayed more than any other minister in France. He suggested that the friar stay another night to check that this explanation was the right one. So the friar pretended to be unwell and was allowed to stay for the extra night. He joined the family for their meals and for family worship. This second night too, after Welsh had some sleep, he began to pray. The friar crept along to Welsh's bedroom door, where he could hear the minister's words clearly. There he heard what he had never heard before. In the morning the friar confessed to the minister that he had been brought up in ignorance and had lived in darkness all his life. He stated his intention to forsake his Romanism, and we are told that he remained a faithful Protestant to the end of his days.

In 1614 Welsh lost his closest friend in France, Robert Boyd, when he returned to Scotland to become Principal of Glasgow University. Welsh and Boyd made arrangements to meet halfway between Jonsac and Saumur to bid each other farewell, but Welsh had to call off the meeting when his eldest

daughter died after being ill for less than a week. "My soul is in anguish," he wrote to Boyd, "but the God of consolation, who comforts those that are cast down, knows how to comfort us. I would beseech you to come this length, though you would find little but subject for sorrow. . . . Let us have a room in your most ardent prayers."

It was probably later the same year that Welsh left Jonsac for the old town of Nerac, 67 miles south-east of Bordeaux. Yet no record remains of Welsh's ministry in one of the four Protestant congregations there. In 1617 John Welsh still had important work to do for his Master. He was to spend four further years as minister of the more important town of St Jean d'Angely, just more than 30 miles south east of La Rochelle. It was probably in that year that he was called to be one of the two pastors of the large charge there. It was the last place to benefit from his devoted and gracious ministry. But, though he still suffered from poor health, his preaching there, it is said, "was much blessed with success".

A Good Answer

There was a good old Christian woman who was full of faith and earnest prayer. Although she was very poor, she was very happy. She went by the name of Granny Bender. One night, as two young lads were on their way back from the town with a couple of loaves of bread, one said to the other, "Tom, suppose we have a little fun with Granny Bender".

"Agreed," said Tom; so they both went up to her cottage to have a look around. Listening at the door, they found old Granny praying for food. She said she had not a bit of bread in the house and she asked the Lord to send her some. The thought at once struck the lads to throw the two loaves down the chimney; so they climbed up on the roof, and soon the two loaves tumbled down and fell just where she was kneeling.

The boys went down and ran round to the window. Looking into the room, they saw her still on her knees. As they listened, they heard her thank the God who answers prayer, for sending her what she needed.

"Well," asked one of the youths, "is the old woman so simple as to believe the Lord answered her prayer and sent her two loaves of bread down the chimney?"

"I have no doubt of it," answered the other, "but let us see." Then he opened the door and cried out, "Hello, Granny. Is it possible that you believe the bread came down from heaven? Why, I threw it down the chimney!"

The old woman's face was turned fully towards the lad who asked the

question. Her eyes filled with tears of thankfulness, and in a tone of strong faith and sharp rebuke she said, "It is not for me to ask who brought it. All I know is, the Lord sent it."

Granny Bender was right; she had a good answer ready for Tom and his friend. God used the lads and their mischievous plans to bring the old lady the food she needed. And yet the two young lads sinned in making fun of someone who was sincerely trusting in the God who has everything under His control.

Prayer: a Duty and a Privilege (1)

Rev W A Weale

This is the first section of a paper given at the Youth Conference in 2024.

In answer to the question: What is Prayer? the *Shorter Catechism* gives the answer: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgements of His mercies".

In this paper we will be referring to this, as well as to the prayer which the Lord taught to His disciples, commonly called "The Lord's Prayer", where we have much instruction on how to pray. But before coming to that, we might ask the questions, (1) Who is it that prays? (2) Why it is necessary to pray? and then, (3) How are we to pray?

1. Who is it that prays? Clearly not everyone. Perhaps the vast majority in our land do not pray. But thinking of those who were brought up in a home where one is taught to pray – all here perhaps – who were taught before going to sleep at night to "say our prayers", we can probably all remember the words our mother taught us. But good as it was to be taught those prayers, it is a fact that we may have regularly uttered the words we were taught and yet never prayed.

In Acts 9 we are told of Ananias being sent to the house where Saul of Tarsus was taken after the Lord met with him when on his way to Damascus. Ananias was told: "Behold he prayeth". As a Pharisee, Saul, or Paul as he became, would have "prayed" many times, but only at this point did he really begin to pray, and every believer can follow this.

But what made the difference? When he used to pray, he was spiritually dead, but now he is alive. So only a person who is spiritually alive really prays; as William Gurnall puts it, "Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural [child]. The child [has] not learned by art [that is, skill] or example to cry but [as it is] instructed by nature; it comes into the

world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms or rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life."

Professor John Murray also has an apt comment on this: "Prayer might be called the very breath of spiritual life. Where saving grace is in exercise, there will be prayer. Where there is no prayer, saving grace is absent. Prayer should cover the whole of life, life in all its extent and detail. 'Be careful for nothing', said the apostle. Be fretfully, distractingly anxious about nothing. 'But', he added, 'in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' Our attitude should ceaselessly be one of prayer. For this amounts to the same thing as constant awareness of our dependence upon God and of our indebtedness to Him for salvation, protection, sustenance, direction and blessing. 'Men ought always to pray and not to faint', Jesus taught by His parable. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,' exhorted His Apostle."

But what about someone who is not a Christian and is in real danger and earnestly cries out, "If there is a God, help me"? David Clarkson asks the question, "Should an unbeliever pray?"

And he answers, "Though an unbeliever sin in praying, yet it is not a sin for him to pray. There is sin in the manner of his praying; but prayer, as to the act and substance of it, is his duty. He sins, not because he prays; that is required of him, but because he prays amiss and not in that manner that is required of him. There are abominations in the prayers of a wicked man, but for him to pray is not an abomination; it is the good and acceptable will of God, that which He commands."

There is also no doubt that God has answered the cries of unbelievers, and God has blessed their deliverance to such people. But the fact remains that only the living person prays, and so the great lesson is to seek to know the Lord Jesus and to have life through Him, and then the Spirit of prayer will be given to them.

Before moving on, we might make the point that, especially for private prayer, there is no place in all creation where we may not pray. Yet the Lord Jesus did warn against the practice of the Pharisees, who prayed "in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men" and exhorts us to go into our closets, and pray in secret (Matthew 6:5,6).

There was a day when our fathers, not having such privacy as we may have today, went into their barns or to a quiet place in the woods or by the sea shore and prayed there. But in difficult circumstances and emergencies, there is no limit as to where we may pray. Nehemiah sent up a silent prayer when in the presence of the King of Persia. King Jehoshaphat cried out for help when he was surrounded by the Syrian army in battle, and Jonah cried

out to God when in the whale's belly. And in every case the Lord heard them and delivered them.

For Younger Readers

The Pony Stopped

A minister was once going on a journey when people either had to walk everywhere or ride on a horse. Someone lent the minister a pony, to make it easier for him. And a lad went with him to take the pony home.

After some time they came to a tree and the pony refused to go any farther. The minister asked the lad what was wrong with the pony.

The lad explained, "That's the tree to which my master ties it while he goes to pray". The master must have been a good man.

So the minister came down from the pony to do the same. He went to pray. Then the minister, the lad and the pony went on their way.

How good to pray often wherever we are and wherever we may be going!

George Whitefield on Board Ship

George Whitefield was a well-known preacher in the 1700s who crossed the Atlantic Ocean several times, so that he could proclaim the gospel in America. He wanted to preach there as well as in the British Isles. Each of these voyages would have taken at least several weeks – in those days when a sailing ship was the only means of getting to the other side of the Ocean. But if there was no wind or if the wind was blowing in the wrong direction, the voyage might take a lot longer. Whitefield's first voyage took four months, but he put his time to good use. He took the opportunity to study the Bible more than he was able to do in Britain, because of how much time he spent in preaching.

But he had a large congregation on board the ship; it was full of soldiers. He hoped that the gospel would be blessed to those men, although people saw soldiers as a careless group of men who were very resistant to the teachings of the Bible. And the officers among them were very opposed to religion; they thought of ministers as hypocrites. It seemed unlikely that any of the ordinary soldiers or their officers would be converted, but that did not stop Whitefield doing what he could. The voyage was long, but it gave him a longer opportunity to proclaim the gospel to them.

On the first Lord's day at sea, many of them were playing cards, possibly

in what was called “the great cabin”; and they were using bad language again and again. When Whitefield heard God’s name being taken in vain, he would turn his head towards a lieutenant who was in charge of a group of soldiers. Then the officer would apologise – he knew what Whitefield meant – but at once he went back to playing cards and swearing.

Soon Whitefield turned his attention to the civilian passengers, treating them with kindness and love, and he won their affection. No doubt he treated the soldiers in the same way, and at last they were ready to listen to him. He read the Bible to them and explained it twice a day “between decks”; it was probably where the soldiers would sling their hammocks for a night’s sleep. As yet he was not allowed to hold a service in the great cabin. But that came about later.

The ship’s captain slept in what was called “the round house”. When Whitefield asked for permission to pray there occasionally, he was allowed, and a few others joined him. After some time, the captain might be seen standing near the round house listening to what was being said, though he had so much disliked Whitefield’s godly ways when they first left port.

Some time later, an army captain invited Whitefield to have a coffee with him. The minister agreed. He took the opportunity to tell the captain that he “thought it a little odd to pray and preach to the servants and not to the master” – in other words, to the ordinary soldiers and not to the officers. He then suggested that he would pray briefly with the captain and others in the great cabin. The captain shook his head; he was not ready to give permission. Then he said rather grudgingly, “I think we may, when we have nothing else to do”.

The ship had to spend a month off Deal, on the south-east coast of Kent. It was held back by winds blowing in the opposite direction to which they wanted to go. Only after the wind changed was Whitefield allowed to give a short address in the main cabin. A noticeable change came over the ship’s captain after Whitefield placed a religious book on his pillow. About the same time, the army captain met Whitefield and told him that he could hold a service, including the explanation of a part of the Bible, twice a day in the great cabin.

The officer saw that Whitefield was in earnest for the good of the men’s souls, and some of them were very much moved by what he said as he faithfully proclaimed the truths of Scripture to them. He told them about God’s mercy to fallen sinners, and even the officers now listened with attention, although at first they were so much opposed to the preacher. That was according to what the Bible tells us: “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Proverbs 16:7).

The ship called at Gibraltar to take more soldiers aboard. It was a place where people from various countries could be found. Whitefield was able to go ashore and preach the gospel to them, and God blessed what he said. Whitefield commented, “Who more unlikely to be wrought on than soldiers? And yet among any set of people I have not been where God has made His power more known. Many that were [spiritually] blind have received their sight; many that had fallen back have repented and turned to the Lord again; many that were ashamed to acknowledge Christ openly have waxed bold; and many saints had their hearts filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Before long the ship sailed away from Gibraltar. Now, instead of having to preach to the officers and ordinary soldiers separately; every morning and evening, the officers would order a drum to be beaten to call everyone on deck, and Whitefield was able to preach to everyone at once. He could see that this was an answer to his prayers.

His ship and two others were now sailing along together; these two other ships would come nearer, at times of worship, so that the people aboard could hear what Whitefield was saying, as a captain stood on each side of him. As the days went by, these captains were more and more influenced by what they were hearing. A crucified Saviour and the things of the kingdom of God were what people were now talking about.

Soldiers were now learning to read and write, and the children on board – most of them probably the children of soldiers, whose wives and families were travelling with them to America – were being taught to say their prayers. Playing cards and “profane books” (probably novels) were thrown overboard; those they belonged to would have realised that, at best, these things were a complete waste of time, which could be put to much better use, especially for the good of their souls; and card-playing is likely to lead people on to gambling. Now it became unusual to hear someone swearing.

When many of the soldiers became ill, Whitefield gave himself to doing what he could to help them. As there would not have been enough room for anyone to stand up, he would crawl on his hands and knees between decks, to give medicine to those who were sick and whatever advice he felt would be helpful.

Everybody was glad to get to the end of such a long voyage. “But”, said Whitefield, “how infinitely more glad will the children of God be when, having passed through the waves of this troublesome world, they arrive at the haven of everlasting rest” in heaven!

Whitefield looked back, many years later, on these months at sea and remembered the happy hours he spent on deck taking services. Though, while at sea, he was missing his friends in England, and though he was not used

to the difficulties of life at sea, he was glad to have been conscious that he had the glory of God and the good of people's souls in view during that time.

How great a work of conversion can be done when the Holy Spirit is poured out even on such hardened, careless sinners as these soldiers and their officers were! We cannot say that they were all converted, but it is a great blessing even when sinners are kept back even from outward sin. Let us be thankful when God restrains sinners – ourselves included – if we have that blessing. But let us not be content with that if we have nothing more. Let us take heed to Jesus' call, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24).

Faithful to God

For many years the Trinitarian Bible Society used to send regular supplies of Scriptures to a man called Nathan Cohen. This man's work of faith and labour of love only came to an end when he was taken to be with the Lord.

At the early age of 15 he was brought out of his natural darkness of soul to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as Messiah and Saviour. An older brother had already been led to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Nathan and other members of the family began to search the Scriptures for themselves. They also attended a Sabbath School at the house of a missionary of the British Jews Society. It was under the ministry of the Word there that Nathan was brought to rejoice in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Other Jewish boys heard of his conversion and threw stones at him and punched him, but he used to say, "I don't mind how much you hurt me; it will never be as much suffering as my Lord suffered for me on the cross". At a meeting in Manchester, some hostile Jewish youths tried to set fire to the coat he was wearing. He was chased and threatened at many other times.

In spite of all the persecution, he continued "valiant in fight" (Hebrews 11:34) and, when he grew up, he kept up a faithful ministry of God's Word. He prayed and meditated on a portion of Holy Scripture in mind and heart, until he was sure he knew what the Lord would have him to say.

He was always anxious to become a full-time missionary to the Jews, and his prayers were answered when two societies began to sponsor his work. This largely involved him being a colporteur – selling Gospels and the Book of Psalms to Jews and Gentiles alike. In two years he personally handed out 2000 Gospels of John and many thousand other parts of Scripture. These Scriptures portions were given with a personal word of exhortation and testimony.

Adapted from Cheering Words

Scripture and Catechism Exercises 2024-25

UK Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section. *Aberdeen:* Julia Macleod. *Barnoldswick:* Bethan Middleton. *Edinburgh:* Fraser Campbell. *Glasgow:* Violet Marr, Shona Ross. *Halkirk:* Grace Maclean. *Inverness:* Susanna Campbell, Callum Morrison.

Intermediate Section. *Barnoldswick:* Susie Middleton, Sam van Essen. *Beaulieu:* Rebekka Fraser, Hudson Maclean. *Dingwall:* D A MacColl, Neil Campbell. *Edinburgh:* Anna Cameron-Macintosh, Beth Dickie. *Glasgow:* Evan Marr. *Halkirk:* Catriona Maclean. *Inverness:* Murray Dickie, James Maton. *North Tolsta:* Rebecca Morrison. *North Uist:* Katie M Macdonald.

Junior Section. *Aberdeen:* Kenneth Macleod, Cassia Soni. *Barnoldswick:* Alexia van Essen. *Dingwall:* Iain MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Alec and Julia Cameron-Mackintosh, Anderson Dickie, Darcy and Joella Esson, Alice Hicklin. *Inverness:* Campbell Dickie. *London:* Ernest Campbell, Andrew and Daniel Macleod. *Halkirk:* Angus Hymers-Mackintosh. *North Harris:* Finlay Jardine. *North Tolsta:* James Morrison.

Upper Primary Section. *Aberdeen:* Philip Macleod. *Dingwall:* Heather Campbell, Mairi MacColl. *Edinburgh:* Samuel Dickie, Leah Hicklin. *Gairloch:* Penny Mackenzie. *Glasgow:* Joel Marr. *Inverness:* Harvey Dickie, Molly Campbell. *London:* Lydia Campbell, Benjamin Macleod. *Portree:* Murdo Macrauld. *North Harris:* Margaret Jardine.

Lower Primary Section. *Aberdeen:* Kate Macleod. *Dingwall:* Charlotte, Seumas and Chirsty MacColl. *Dornoch:* Hugo and Elspeth Schouten. *Edinburgh:* Edward and Arthur Cameron-MacKintosh, Alasdair Campbell, James Dickie, Theodore and Jessica Esson, Matthew Hicklin, Genevieve and Alexander MacLean. *Gairloch:* Esther MacKenzie. *Glasgow:* Susanna Gillies, Magnus and Archie van Kralingen. *Inverness:* Emily and Alfie Campbell, Grace Campbell, Rose Dickie, Annalise and Austin Schouten. *London:* William Campbell, Peter Macleod. *North Harris:* George Jardine. *Stornoway:* Murdo Maclean.

Overseas Names for Exercise 2

Senior Section: *Auckland:* Peter Campbell. *Calgary:* Khloe Chang. *Gisborne:* Shona Hembd. *Münster:* Clara Rösner.

Intermediate Section: *Auckland:* Joseph Campbell. *Calgary:* Karsten Chang. *Chesley:* Angela Tuinier. *Gisborne:* Brooklyn Hembd. *Sydney:* Ethan Macdonald.

Junior Section: *Auckland:* Keith Smith. *Edmonton:* John Mun. *Gisborne:* Preston Hembd. *Sydney:* Abigail Macdonald.

Upper Primary Section: *Auckland:* Marion Campbell. *Chesley:* Meleah Tuinier. *Edmonton:* Anna Mun. *Fountain Inn:* Katherine Kerr. *Gisborne:* Ashley Hembd. *Münster:* Conrad Rösner. *Santa Fe:* Scout Smith. *Sydney:* Lachlan Macdonald. *Tarragona:* Valentina Nayach van Essen. *Woodstock:* Jo-Anne Heikoop.

Lower Primary Section: *Auckland:* David and Janet Campbell, Daniel Smith. *Chesley:* James and Nathan Kuiper. *Edmonton:* Hephzi-bah and Isaiah Mun. *Fountain Inn:* Jehosheba Kerr. *Gisborne:* Andrew and Ian Hembd. *Grafton:* Samuel Yong. *Melbourne:* Yuri Bratanov. *Santa Fe:* Winslow Smith. *Sydney:* Jackson Campbell, Hugh and James Macdonald. *Woodstock:* Emma Heikoop.

New Zealand Youth Conference for 2025

The Asia Pacific Presbytery have arranged a Youth Conference this year in the Bay of Islands in New Zealand for December 16 to 18, God willing. For further information, please contact Rev Jett Smith. The papers to be presented will be indicated later on.

(Rev) Jett Smith, Convener

Looking Around Us

A Sad Day in Scotland

It was a sad day in Scotland when our politicians voted in support of plans to allow someone to seek medical help to end their life. They think it is kind to allow someone that has an illness to take some medicine that will kill them, so that they do not have to suffer – if it is an illness that doctors do not expect to be able to cure. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the Scottish Parliament is deciding such things; as a country we have turned our back on God, and it is a sign that He is leaving us to our sinful selves.

Maybe it is a topic that has come up for some of you at school, and you have had to take part in a debate on it. It is so important in these matters to use God's Word to direct us. If we do so, we can be sure that we are speaking the truth. It is the fool that has said in his heart that there is no God.

In the debate in Parliament, there was no doubt that "it is appointed unto men once to die", but very sadly there was no mention of the judgement that follows death. Indeed, nobody mentioned the fact that everyone has a precious soul that never goes out of existence. Instead, our MSPs think that, we have the right to live our lives as we want to and so we should have the right to die as we wish. How foolish! It is in God that "we live, and move, and have our being". Therefore we have no such right to die. Instead, we should be doing all that we can to preserve our lives as required of us in the Sixth Commandment.

Emotional speeches were made in the chamber about how this new law could stop people from having to endure suffering for years. Of course, it is not pleasant to see anyone in pain and it must be very difficult if it goes on for a long time. But how do years of bodily suffering compare to never-ending suffering in a lost eternity? Christ tells us that it is better to enter life without our arms and legs, than to have all our limbs and "be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched".

But what a blessing to know the wonderful message of the gospel! Christ took on our human nature, with its weaknesses, and endured unimaginable suffering so that sinners who trust in Him may be saved and enjoy eternal rest in heaven, where there is no sickness or pain. Therefore, we should be seeking Christ and His kingdom above all else, remembering the promise that those who seek shall find. Pray to Him that He would heal your soul that is sick with sin: He is willing to do so.

E Mackenzie

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