

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



November 2025

Vol 90 • No 11

Contents

Friends	203
The Need for a Testimony (1)	206
James Renwick:	
4. Studies in Holland	207
Delivered From Danger	210
Can the Christian Church Survive?	
1. The Age of the Apostles	212
“I Will Pour Water”:	
3. God Pouring Floods on Dry Ground	215
For Younger Readers:	
God Gives	217
For Junior Readers:	
Why Did She Still Come to Church?	218
Looking Around Us	219

Cover picture: Merkinch Nature Reserve, Inverness.

The Young People's Magazine

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

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

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

Subscriptions, Renewals, Changes of Address should be sent to the General Treasurer: Mr W Campbell, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE; tel: 0141 332 9283; e-mail: william.campbell@fpcoffice.org. The subscription year ends in December, and subscriptions should be sent in January each year for the following 12 months. Subscription rates for 2025, including postage, are: *Free Presbyterian Magazine* £36.80 (£2.95 per copy); *Young People's Magazine* £20.00 (£1.50 per copy); both magazines £55.20. All queries should be directed to the General Treasurer, not to the printer.

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

The Young People's Magazine

Volume 90

November 2025

Number 11

Friends

Do you have many friends? Perhaps a better question would be, Do you have reliable friends – friends that will stick with you even when things get difficult? And are they good friends? Are they friends who will not lead you into temptation? Or do they encourage you to follow their worldly lifestyles, rather than show you a lifestyle which is according to the teaching of the Bible? Ask God to provide you with good friends, who will show you a good example.

The Bible speaks about friends, for example in Proverbs 17:17: “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”. The friend described here is a faithful friend, who will continue his or her friendship no matter what happens, though we should recognise that it may be our fault if a friendship breaks down – and a friendship should not be so close if your friend goes away from following the Bible. A brother, or a sister, should be a faithful friend, and when adversity – a time of difficulty – comes, it should not damage friendship.

Even stronger should be the friendship between a husband and wife; that should be unbreakable, no matter what happens. But that union between a man and a woman does get broken, even before death. Too many marriages end in divorce, and very often these divorces cannot be justified from the Bible, which only allows divorce when the husband or wife has committed adultery, or when one party has deserted the other and they cannot be brought together again either by the efforts of the church or the state.

Marriage ought to be for life; so the man looking for a wife and the woman looking for a husband should choose carefully – and prayerfully. God can guide those who look to Him for help so that they will find someone with whom they can live happily while they are both spared in this world. God is able to keep people back from making a foolish choice of marriage partner – one who is not really suited to them. Remember that “a prudent wife is from the Lord” (Proverbs 19:14) (*prudent* means wise or shrewd or cautious).

Remember too the duty not to be “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). If two oxen are unequally yoked, one may

be bigger than the other and they will not pull well together when they are ploughing; it will probably be rather uncomfortable for the smaller ox. So in a marriage, if one partner is a believer and the other is not, the believer will probably not be comfortable – and possibly the unbeliever also. The believer is in danger of being influenced in a wrong direction, so that he or she will not grow in grace so quickly, or may even backslide.

And those who believe the truth of the Bible, yet have not trusted in the Lord Jesus, are being warned against marrying someone who rejects the Bible. Christ is calling those who hear and read the Word of God to believe in Him, but those who marry someone who has no interest in the Bible is making it more unlikely that they ever will be saved. Indeed, the danger is that they will be influenced further and further away from the truth.

But let us go back to the first married couple: Adam and Eve. When God created them, they were perfect; they loved each other perfectly; they were perfect friends to each other. That continued until Satan came into the Garden of Eden, where they lived. He tempted them to disobey God.

At once they lost their perfection; they had fallen; they were now sinful. They were no longer perfect friends. And when God challenged Adam about eating the fruit that He had forbidden, Adam was ready to put the blame on Eve. He said to God: “*The woman* whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12).

Yes, she showed him a bad example, but he was fully responsible for what he did in taking the forbidden fruit. For Adam to blame Eve as he did was not a loving act; it was now clear that they were no longer the perfectly close friends that they had been before they fell into sin.

What was more, God was no longer Adam and Eve's Friend. When God came into the garden, as He had come, presumably, on other days when He was their Friend, they had no wish for His company. They hid “from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8); at least they *tried* to hide.

Of course, they could not; God sees everything; He sees everyone all the time. A canopy of leaves, no matter how thick, could not begin to hide these two sinners from God's sight. No doubt they felt guilty; their consciences were active; they no longer *wanted* to feel that God was near them. Yet now they needed Him more than ever as their Friend.

Following Adam's sin, we are all – as his descendants – fallen sinners. We may form loving relationships, but they will not be perfect, and we should not expect that. Yet there is one Friend that we all need. He is a perfect Friend; He is a Friend that will stick “closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world to

reconcile sinners to God. He came so that children of Adam – who are enemies to God by wicked works – might become His friends.

So Peter writes, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). When sinners look to Christ by faith, they are accepted by God as if they had never sinned – because Christ took their sins and suffered unto death in their place. Indeed, they are accepted by God as if they had always kept His commandments perfectly, because Christ kept the whole law perfectly instead of them. That means they are justified; God accepts them for the sake of Christ.

What a friend! He acted as a friend when they were enemies. So Paul speaks on behalf of all God’s people: “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). And He is even inviting unconverted sinners, His enemies, to come to Him and become His friends. He says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). To *come* to Christ is to believe on Him, to trust in Him; and the *rest* He gives is the rest of salvation from sin and all its consequences. And when sinners believe, they are brought into God’s family; they are adopted, so that Christ becomes their elder brother, and they will never be expelled from that family.

His is a love that will never fail; it is a love that will never grow weaker. His promise to His people is: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). I have already quoted the words of Proverbs: “A brother is born for adversity”. When adversity, hardship of some kind, comes our way, the best friend we can have is probably a brother – apart possibly from a husband and wife.

We have already noticed that, for those who believe in Christ Jesus, He has become their elder Brother. There can be no better friend than He in times of adversity. He is the Son of God and so He is able to do whatever is necessary to deliver us from the trouble; there is no limit to His power. So, we are told, “He is able also to save them *to the uttermost* that come unto God by Him” (Hebrews 7:25).

What is it that the children of God need to be saved from? Whatever their needs may be, Christ is able to deliver them from them all. What about sin? God’s children were forgiven all their sins when they first believed, and they are being forgiven all their further sins. Yet they also need the *power* of sin in their hearts to be subdued. Yes, however strong the power of sin in their hearts still feels, He will yet reduce it to nothing, for He is able to save them completely, and He will do so, working through the Holy Spirit. Christ is a Friend who will never neglect His people. Let us remember that we must seek Him earnestly. He is able to save *us* to the uttermost.

The Need for a Testimony (1)

Rev D MacLean

This is the first part of an article reprinted with editing from *The Young People's Magazine* for December 1949.

The true Church of God on earth is a witnessing church. It dwells in a large measure in the enemy's land, and it must raise a testimony there on the side of God and His truth. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God" (Isaiah 43:12). This testimony to which the Church is to bear witness, she receives from God Himself. "For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children" (Ps 78:5).

The Church is not to hide the testimony which it receives but is to display it fearlessly. It is to do so in the strength of God's grace, in every place where she is called to bear witness by her Lord. "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth" (Psalm 60:4). The unfurling and displaying of the banner points out the rallying place for those who are on the Lord's side and shows that the testimony is still being displayed in the face of the enemy.

The testimony that the Lord has given to His Church is to be found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The mind of God is revealed in them; there is no need to use the wisdom of the world. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the Church is to bear witness to the great truths revealed in the Bible. The Church is to believe that, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is inspired by God and sent forth to mankind as a revelation of His mind. Thus the exhortation Paul addressed to Timothy applies to the whole Church: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1:13,14).

What Church will bear the clearest testimony on the side of God in the world? It should now be evident that it will be the body which keeps most closely to God's Word in its doctrine, government and practice. Keeping closely to the Bible was the beauty and strength of the Reformed Church in Scotland. Both at the First and Second Reformations, in the 1500s and 1600s, nothing was allowed in the Church's testimony except what was contained in the Word of God. So the testimony raised by our forefathers, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, was fully in accordance with the truth of God in all branches of the Church's witness.

This testimony is needed in this godless world. Man, by nature, is without

God and without hope in the world. He is under the power of the god of this world. Being led captive by the devil at his will, he rebels against the authority of the God of heaven and uses the language of the wicked who “say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?” (Job 21:14,15).

In those dark places, where enmity to God and ignorance of His truth prevails, the Church is to raise its testimony. It is to address kings and others who are in power: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth” (Psalm 2:10).

The Church is to obey the direction, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God” (1 Timothy 6:17). Among the rest of the people, the Church is to take up the words of Jeremiah: “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” (Jeremiah 4:14). She is thus to cast the light of her testimony upon the sins of the times and, on the other hand, to proclaim the glad tidings: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

James Renwick

4. Studies in Holland

F R Daubney

Another section of a paper given at this year's Youth Conference. Last month's article gave a summary of Renwick's early life and spoke about his conviction that it was his duty to associate with those who were suffering persecution for resisting attempts by the King and the Scottish Government to control the Church in Scotland.

Now to explain about the societies. After the battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679, Richard Cameron and Donald Cargill felt there ought to be some form of association between the various Covenanter groups throughout Scotland. These groups were therefore formed into societies, each having as its foundation the Sanquhar Declaration (see the September issue).

They practised separation from all the Presbyterians who had accepted the acts of indulgence and from those who held communion with indulged Presbyterians. There were about 80 such societies, mainly in the south and west of Scotland, and the estimated strength of the non-indulged Presbyterian church was 6000-7000 at this time. The Societies provided mutual support for their members, organised conventicles and protected the field preachers.

The death of Cargill had left the Societies without a leader or a minister, and it was felt that, if the cause was not to wither away, they should work together. Then, with strength in numbers, they might still make an effective testimony for the truth.

At the first meeting of the United Societies, in December 1681, about 80 men met, and James Renwick, aged 19, was appointed clerk of the meeting. The first business was to draw up a declaration against the evils of the King and government, and especially the Test Act. The declaration ranged widely and outlined the dreadful persecutions of the times – the slaughter, imprisonments and banishments. It justified rising up against the tyranny and asserted that, in doing so, they were breaking none of the ancient laws, of the state or of the Church.

A month later, on January 12, a body of 40 Covenanters on horseback and 20 on foot went to Lanark and fixed a copy of the Declaration to the Mercat Cross. They also posted copies throughout the town. This provoked outrage among the authorities. They ordered the magistrates of Edinburgh to have the hangman publicly burn the Lanark Declaration, the Sanquhar Declaration and other documents at the Mercat Cross, and the town of Lanark was heavily fined for not confronting the Covenanters.

At this time there were several flourishing Scottish congregations in Holland, as many Presbyterian ministers had sought refuge there over the years, especially after Bothwell. One prominent family was the Gordons of Earlston, near Galashiels, who had supported the Reformed faith for many years and provided a refuge for Cameron, Cargill and other field preachers.

In June 1679, William Gordon was on his way to Bothwell Bridge when he was shot dead by government troops. His son Alexander narrowly escaped and joined the other refugees in Holland. In his absence, he was sentenced to death and his estates confiscated. In 1681 he secretly returned to Scotland to visit his sick wife, and the Societies enlisted him as their commissioner to the Dutch churches in Holland.

Earlston's wife, Janet Hamilton, had a brother, Sir Robert Hamilton, who had been Richard Cameron's bodyguard and, although he had no military experience, he had commanded the forces which opposed the Government at Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge. Now in exile in Holland, he was introduced to William à Brakel, a minister in Friesland.

Hamilton was a strong advocate of the Societies, influencing many church leaders and ministers in Holland on their behalf. He was appointed as the Societies' representative in Holland – presumably to work with Alexander Gordon. He proposed that four or five men from the Societies be trained for the ministry by the Dutch church. Brakel and his friends readily agreed. The

Societies were delighted and, from six candidates, four were selected by lot: John Flint, William Boyd, John Nisbet and James Renwick.

At the end of 1682 Renwick joined Flint and Boyd at the University of Groningen. For the next four months they learned doctrine, practical theology, Latin and Hebrew. Renwick confided in Hamilton that the need for earnest study conflicted with the demands of his devotional life. He missed Scotland, the cause there was a constant concern to him, and he longed to be labouring with the remnant. He wrote, "Who is sufficient for these things? And why is [God] calling poor, unworthy, nothing me out to such a great and glorious work? I think that He is saying that the excellency of the power may be of Himself and not of me."

Renwick had already been on a trip to Holland representing the Societies and had got to know Robert Hamilton and his brother-in-law Earlston. He had successfully refuted criticisms which had been made against the Societies by disaffected ex-members. Hamilton thought highly of Renwick, and they were writing to each other regularly. In fact, Hamilton was so impressed with Renwick's abilities, spirituality and maturity that he suggested to Brakel that the young student should be ordained as soon as possible for the work he had set his heart on.

Brakel thought this an excellent suggestion, and he and Hamilton wrote to Renwick to tell him what they planned. Renwick replied saying that he did not at all deserve to be honoured in such a way and that he was unworthy to carry out such a great and glorious work. Yet, casting himself on the care of the Lord and asking for the prayers of his friends, he agreed that he was willing that they should go ahead as suggested.

For some reason Renwick showed the letter he had received from Hamilton to his fellow students Flint and Boyd, both of whom took this as applying to themselves also. This was an embarrassment to Hamilton, because no such thing was intended. So he set about persuading them not to seek early ordination.

Boyd was doubtful about his own suitability for an early ordination and was easily dissuaded, but Flint was determined to be put forward along with Renwick. He did eventually withdraw his application for ordination and later completed his studies but was never ordained. The Presbytery of Groningen then arranged Renwick's ordination for 10 May 1683. After a four-hour examination by the Presbytery, James Renwick was ordained with the laying on of hands.

This was an extraordinary occasion. Renwick was ordained as a minister of the Scottish Church with not a single Scottish minister present. He was only 21 years old, when the normal age for becoming a minister was 25, and

he had studied formally for only four months. All agreed that he was a remarkable young man.

The Moderator said that the whole time Renwick had been before them, “he was so filled with the Spirit that his face did shine; and that he had never seen such evident tokens of the Lord’s being with them as in this affair”. The Presbytery of Groningen gave Renwick every endorsement necessary to allow him to go back to his homeland and preach to the precious remnant.

In the summer of 1683, Renwick boarded a ship to take him back to Scotland, after being 9 months in Holland. Departure was delayed because of unfavourable winds, and some of the passengers urged him to drink to the King’s health. When he refused, they threatened to report him to the authorities; so he left that ship and boarded another bound for Ireland.

A violent storm compelled them to seek refuge in Rye harbour, on the south coast of England. This was very dangerous, as there had recently been a conspiracy to assassinate the King and his brother, the Duke of York, who was to succeed him as king. The ports were being watched, and the plotters were being rounded up and executed. Renwick was greatly relieved when the weather improved and the ship sailed on to Dublin.

Delivered From Danger

He was just a teenager when his father died. His uncle gave him a job as a clerk in his business; it sold goods to shops, which they then sold to their customers. The uncle only cared about his nephew’s needs for this life and so trained him up in how the business was run, believing that he would then be well provided for, throughout the rest of his life. But his uncle showed no concern for his spiritual needs in this life or in eternity.

The clerk got on well in his work. He worked hard and was thorough in what he did and was always punctual, but he did not feel tired. He enjoyed his work and made many friends as he had a friendly attitude. But these friends had a bad influence on him, so that he wandered quickly down the broad road – which leads to a lost eternity.

Every evening he went with his friends to the theatre. On their way home, they would spend some hours in a bar drinking wine and playing cards. They did not just waste their time with cards but they also gambled. The clerk claimed afterwards to have had some ability in playing, so that he seldom lost money.

He still lived at home with his mother and let himself in to the house when the night was far spent. She had no idea how her dear son was spending his

time – or, rather, misspending it. He continued this lifestyle until he was 19. But he was now feeling unwell and was losing interest in his work.

One Thursday evening, the clerk stayed behind as usual after the other workers had gone home. As he was locking his desk, there was a knock at the door. It was a little boy wearing ragged clothes. He handed a note addressed to himself in a woman's handwriting. The clerk opened it and found a serious message, signed by Mary: she had been watching how he was behaving, she wrote; she knew his habits; she could see how his future would turn out (if he continued to follow his present lifestyle). And she asked him to meet her at nine o'clock in a local square.

But who was Mary? The clerk had no idea; he had no relative or close friend with that name. But obviously she had a concern for his welfare, especially his eternal welfare.

He pulled a chair near the fire. It was still burning in the office, and he began to consider his position. For two hours there was a sharp conflict in his mind. Then he pulled out two tickets; they were season tickets for two theatres to which he and his friends went regularly. He looked at the tickets, still considering what to do. At last he threw one of them into the fire. Then this second ticket followed the first into the flames. Then he vowed that he would never again, while he lived, set foot inside a theatre.

He acknowledged, "With God's help, I have been able to keep that vow" though he did not have the courage to go to meet "Mary", who had promised to meet him at the square. He never found out who she was.

From that time, the clerk gave up the lifestyle that was sending him on towards a lost eternity. He gave up his friends and did not go around with them anymore. For five months he was in great distress because of his sins against God but, he believed, "I at last found peace in believing".

When he wrote these words, he added that, of the six young men who went together night after night to one or other of the theatres, he was the only one still alive. "The others", he said, "were allowed to continue in their sins, and all died young – summoned in the midst of their wickedness to the judgement." God had delivered one from danger.

Let us learn: 1. It is dangerous to set out on a course of sin. This is especially true when young people are growing up, perhaps when they finish school or go away from home to begin college, for instance, or university or an apprenticeship – beginning some new stage in life.

2. Ask God to keep you from being influenced by the bad examples of other people you come in contact with. Ask God to help you choose your friends wisely.

3. The sooner anyone turns back from the ways of sin the better. But do

not try to turn away from sin in your own strength. Ask God for His help. But do not be content with living a *more* upright life. You will always be in danger of sliding back into the ways of sin. You need a new heart. You need faith in Jesus Christ. He is the One who died for sinners like you so that they may be saved. He is calling you, as Paul and Silas directed the jailer in Philippi, to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31).

4. Only those who believe in Jesus will be safe from falling permanently into the ways of sin. Yet even believers must ask God to keep them from falling into sin.

5. Notice too that the clerk realised that he must give up going to the theatre. But why was that necessary? Because when actors are playing some character in a play, they cannot mean what they say; they are putting on a false performance. It is forbidden by the Ninth Commandment, part of which is: “Thou shalt not bear false witness”. And plays very often depict what is sinful. They are making sin attractive, which is not good for anyone watching. Today people are open to the same dangers by watching films downloaded from the internet or broadcast on TV.

6. As noticed already, to play cards is a great waste of time and it tends to lead to gambling. And if the clerk did not lose money overall, his friends did, perhaps a serious amount.

7. A final comment: for people to spend time in a bar is liable to lead to drinking too much, spending money they cannot afford, in company which is not likely to be good for them spiritually.

Can the Christian Church Survive?

1. The Age of the Apostles

This is the first section of a paper that was given at this year's Youth Conference.

Why do we ask the question? Because in countries like the United Kingdom, the Church of God is becoming weaker and weaker and, if present trends continue, the Church will eventually disappear. One cannot say that these trends are to be seen in all parts of the world. But certainly the United Kingdom is a country where God and His authority are very much rejected and the Bible is very largely ignored and its teachings despised.

But what is the Church of God? Let us seek our answer from *The Larger Catechism*, compiled by the godly men who made up the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s. In fact, I will give two answers. First, in answer to the question, “What is the visible Church?” the *Catechism* tells us: “The visible Church is a society made up of all such as, in all ages and places of

the world, do profess the true religion, and of their children” (Answer 62). In this view of it, the Church can be *seen* because every generation, in every place, can see, if they make enough effort, who they are that profess to believe the true religion. Their children also are to be counted as belonging to the visible Church.

The second question is: “What is the invisible Church?” *The Larger Catechism* tells us: “The invisible Church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head” (Answer 64). Rather obviously, it is impossible for the people in any one generation to know all those whom God has chosen to eternal life. In any case, many of them have already died without leaving any mark on the history of the world; others have not yet been born; some of God’s chosen ones who have been born are still unconverted; and there are others whom we have never met and never will in this world.

But all of the elect, or chosen ones, will be brought into the kingdom of God and will be taken finally to heaven when their life in this world is over. Clearly the *invisible Church* will always continue; it can never be swept away, especially because part of it is already in heaven.

But it is the *visible Church* that we are to speak about in this paper, those who are alive in this world in any particular generation and profess to follow the true religion. We will try to show from history that, however weak – in numbers and spiritual strength – the Church of God has become, it has never passed out of existence. God has always kept it from being destroyed.

We may bear in mind that, as Satan goes about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour”, he wants to destroy the whole Church of God – perhaps even more than any individual part of it. We will also try to show from the Bible that the Church will always be kept in existence and that Satan will never succeed in destroying it, however strong and subtle his attempts may be.

When Jesus ascended to heaven, He left 11 men, the Apostles, in this world to build up the Church. He had told them to go and “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19,20). These were men who were so distressed and discouraged when their Master was crucified that it must have seemed highly unlikely that the Church in their time would ever make any progress.

But that is to leave out of account two things. *First*, how much wonderful teaching – exactly what they needed – the Saviour gave them during the 40 days before His ascension to heaven. Before the Saviour left them, the Disciples were well prepared for the great work that was before them.

Second, it is to ignore Christ's promises to His disciples: He sent them out to preach on the basis that (1) "*all power* is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" and (2) "*I am with you always*, even unto the end of the world". They were not being sent out on their own. Christ Jesus was to go with them, and it was through His power that sinners would be converted and brought into the Church.

Not only in the age of the Apostles was Christ with those who had been called to preach the gospel, but it is so in every age. He still has all power over everything that happens in this world – but, especially, He rules over everything that happens in connection with His Church. Many things will happen, and have happened, that are very damaging to the Church of God; but He has preserved it in the midst of every danger.

On the Day of Pentecost, Christ showed His power. Peter and other disciples preached that Christ had just sent the Holy Spirit to apply the truth to the hearts of sinners. That day 3000 souls were converted, a very substantial increase in the size of the Church of God.

Throughout the age of the Apostles, the Church had to face persecution. First Stephen was put to death and later James. Immediately afterwards, Peter was arrested, but God sent an angel who delivered him from prison. Time and again, Paul was set upon and injured, but in no way was he deterred from his work. God gave him strength and grace to continue his extensive travels to preach the gospel, through what is now Turkey, and in various parts of Europe where Paul and his companions went to make Christ known.

He was eventually arrested in Jerusalem and executed in Rome some years later, but the Church continued to expand. Individual Christians were put to death on the charge of atheism – not that they worshipped *no* God, but that they did not worship the false gods that were generally accepted in the areas where these Christians lived.

In the second century, a Christian called Tertullian stated that Christians were made scapegoats for whatever went wrong. He wrote, "If the River Tiber rises as high as the city walls of Rome, if the River Nile does not send its waters over the fields, if there is an earthquake, or famine, or a plague, immediately the cry is, 'The Christians to the lions'." No matter what disaster happened, it was the fault of the Christians and they deserved to be punished – or so the authorities claimed. Sending Christians to be torn apart by lions appealed to the authorities as a means of entertaining the people of Rome; such was the cruelty of that heathen age.

But the age of the Apostles passed away, most of them suffering violent deaths. But when these men who had seen the risen Christ were removed from the Church by death, and many of the next generation also, there would

fairly obviously be a weakening of the influence of the true teaching that these men had given.

Probably much more dangerous than any degree of persecution, however severe, was the undermining of their true teaching, that was firmly based on Scripture and on Christ’s teaching. And there was much false teaching, even heresy – which is false teaching that is specially serious. For instance, the Apostle John speaks of “deceivers” who had come into the world but did not confess “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (2 John 7); they taught that He did not have a true human body. If so, He was not a true man; He was not a true mediator between God and men; He could not take away sin; He could not save.

But all that was wrong; it was what the *deceivers* were saying. People like them were causing enormous damage to the Church. And yet the Church survived; Christ was on His throne in heaven and was watching over it.

“I Will Pour Water”

3. God Pouring Floods on Dry Ground

R M M’Cheyne

The last part of a sermon, as edited, preached in Dundee in 1838. The second part spoke of God working in thirsty souls.

Isaiah 44:3,4. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.*

3. God pours floods on the dry ground. The dry ground represents those who are dead in trespasses and sins. You have seen the ground, in a dry summer, all parched and dry, cracking and open; yet it does not speak; it does not ask the clouds to fall. So is it with most in our parishes. They are all dead and dry, parched and withered, without a prayer for grace, without even a desire for it. Yet what does God say? “I will pour floods upon them.”

Marks of dry ground. (1.) They do not pray. I believe there are many in our parishes who do not make a habit of secret prayer – who neither in their closet, or under the shade of a tree, ever pour out their heart to God. I believe there are many who are dropping into hell who have never so much as said, “God be merciful to me a sinner”. Ah, these are the dry ground. It is sad to think that the souls that are nearest to hell are the souls that pray least to be delivered from it.

(2.) They do not wish a work of grace in their souls. I believe many of

you came to the house of God today who would rather lose house and friends than have a work of grace done in your heart. Nothing would terrify you so much as the idea that God might make you a praying Christian. Ah, you are the dry ground; you love death.

(3.) Those who do not attend to the preached Word. I have heard anxious people declare that they never heard a sermon in all their life till they were awakened – that they regularly thought about something else all the time. I believe this is the way with many of you. You are the dry ground.

What will God speak of pouring out on you? Floods, floods of wrath? No; floods of grace, floods of the Spirit, floods of blessing. O the mercy of God – it passes all understanding. You deserve the flood that came on the world of the ungodly; but He offers floods of blessing. You deserve the rain of Sodom; but He offers floods of His Spirit.

First Lesson. Learn how important it is for you that there should be a work of grace in our time. You are the very persons who do not care about lively preaching, who ridicule prayer meetings, and mock secret prayer; yet you are the very people that are most concerned.

Ah, poor dry-ground souls, you should be the first to cry out for lively ministers; you should go round the Christians and, on your bended knees, plead with them to come out to our prayer meeting. You, more than all the rest, should wait for the fulfilment of this promise of the Spirit; for if He does not come, what will become of you? Poor dead, dead souls, you cannot pray for yourselves! One by one, you will drop into a sad eternity.

Second Lesson. Learn, Christians, to pray for floods. It is God's Word. He puts it into your mouth. Do not ask for drops, when God offers floods. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

4. Effects. (1.) *Saved souls will be like grass.* They shalt spring up as grass. So it is in Psalm 72: "They of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth". Many will be awakened and many saved. At present, Christ's people are like a single lily among many thorns; but in a time of grace they shall be like grass. Count the blades of grass that spring in the clear shining after rain; so many shall Christ's people be. Count the drops of dew that come from the womb of the morning, shining like diamonds in the morning sun; so shall Christ's people be in a day of his power. Count the stars that sparkle in night's black mantle; so shall Abraham's seed be. Count the dust of the earth; so shall Israel be in the day when the Holy Spirit is poured out. You men of prayer, pray for an outpoured Spirit, so that many may be raised up in our time to call Him blessed.

(2.) *Believers shall grow like willows.* There is nothing more distressing in our day than the need of growth among the children of God. They do not

seem to press forward; they do not seem to be running a race. When I compare this year with last year, what is the difference? There is the same weakness, the same coldness. Indeed, I fear, greater lack of effort in divine things. How different when the Spirit is poured out! They shall be like willows. You have seen the willow, how it grows; it does not stop day or night; it is always growing, always shooting out new branches. Cut it down, and it springs again.

So would you be, Christians, if there was a floodtime of the Spirit, a day of Pentecost. (1) Then there would be less care about your business and your workshop, more love of prayer and of sweet praises. (2) There would be more change in your heart – victory over the world, the devil and the flesh. You would come out and be separate. (3) In affliction, you would grow in sweet submission, humility, meekness. There was a time in Scotland when Sabbath days were growing days. Hungry souls came to the Word and went away filled with good things. They came like Martha and went away like Mary. They came like Samson, when his locks were shorn, and went away like Samson when his locks were grown.

(3). *Self-dedication*. “One shall say, I am the Lord’s.” There is no greater joy than for a believing soul to give himself all to God. This has always been the way in times of refreshing. It was so at Pentecost. First they gave themselves unto the Lord. It was so with Thomas Boston, Philip Doddridge, Jonathan Edwards and all the holy men of old.

“I have this day been before God,” says Edwards, “and have given myself – all that I am and have – to God; so that I am in no respect my own. I can challenge no right in myself – in my understanding, my will, my love. Neither have I a right to this body, or any of its members – no right to my tongue, my hands, my feet, my eyes, my ears. I have given myself clean away.” I wish you knew the joy of giving yourself away. You cannot keep yourself. This day seek to give all to Him. Lie in His hand. Children, O that you would become like him who said, “I am God’s boy altogether, Mother!”

For Younger Readers

God Gives

A mother was very ill. And she was very thirsty. Standing by her bed was her daughter, 14 years old. The daughter wanted to help her mother.

Suddenly the daughter had an idea. She had seen beautiful grapes in the King’s gardens. She decided to find out how much one bunch of grapes would cost. She would be so happy if she could get just one bunch.

Away the girl went as quickly as she could. She found a guard at the first buildings she came to. She told him what she wanted and then said, "I must see the King".

The soldier told her that it was not possible.

"But Mother is dying", she told him, trying to change his mind.

The guard explained, "I can let no one pass these gates".

Then she burst into tears. Just then the King's son rode up to the gates. He noticed how sad the girl was. He turned to her and asked, "Well, and what do you want with the King?"

She explained about her mother and told the King's son that she wanted to know what it would cost to buy a bunch of grapes. She then said, "Mother is so thirsty". He then told her to follow him. He cut off a nice bunch of grapes. He gave them to the girl and then said, "My father does not sell; he gives". The bunch of grapes was a gift.

That is what God does. He does not sell the good things He sends us; He gives them; He gives them freely. Ask God to save your soul. He does not sell salvation; He gives it freely, because of what Jesus has done.

For Junior Readers

Why Did She Still Come to Church?

An old minister spoke about a good old lady in his congregation. For many years she had been very deaf. She was so deaf that she could not notice even the loudest sound. Yet she was always one of the first people to come to the church for a service.

The minister asked her why she always came to church though she could not hear anything.

The good woman answered, "Though I cannot hear you, I come to God's house because I love it". She wanted to go in the ways of God, where He tells us to go. She added, "He gives me many a sweet thought on the text when it is pointed out to me". She enjoyed thinking about the verse the minister spoke about, after some kind person had shown her where it was.

"Another reason is," she went on, "there I am in the best company . . . among His saints, the honourable of the earth. I am not satisfied with serving God in private; it is my duty and privilege to honour Him regularly in public." And she felt nearer in church to God than anywhere else in the world.

We should follow her example by always coming to church unless there is something serious enough to stop us. And we should ask God to bless us what we are hearing.

Looking Around Us

An Old Copy of the Ten Commandments

The oldest known Ten Commandments tablet, a flat piece of stone inscribed in an old form of Hebrew letters and dated 300-800 AD, will be put on sale in New York on December 18. It was unearthed in the Middle East in 1913 during excavations for a railway. It is expected to be sold for \$1-2 million. At one time, before its significance was recognised, it was used as a paving stone. Probably, among those who saw it, there was no one who could read the old form of writing.

And how many people today treat the Ten Commandments as irrelevant! They do not recognise the authority of God, who gave them – and who gave them for our good (see Romans 7:12). The present owners of the tablet realise that it is very valuable; they stand to make a lot of money from it. So those who realise that the Ten Commandments are valuable should get great benefit from them. Those who pay attention to the Commandments will, by God's grace, be kept from much danger, especially from spiritual danger, as they make their way through this world.

The tablet also includes a Samaritan instruction to worship God on Mount Gerizim. Whoever added this direction to the Commandments that God gave did wrong. He was misleading people – in a very important matter. Jerusalem was the place where, in Old Testament times, people were to come *together* to worship God, but they could worship God anywhere on their own. A lot of damage can be done by adding to God's Word. We must not take away from it or add to it (see Revelation 22:18,19).

You may remember the point the woman of Samaria put to Jesus, as they spoke by Jacob's well: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain [Gerizim]; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). But Jesus kept control of the conversation and showed the woman that there were other questions: Who is God? and, How is He to be worshipped?

Jesus told her: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth".

The woman then spoke about the Messiah, the Christ. He was the One revealed in the Old Testament as coming to save sinners, the One who was to be "wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5).

Jesus then said, "I that speak unto thee am He". He was telling her that He was the Messiah. He spoke these words into her soul, and she believed on Him as the Saviour of sinners like her. She was converted. That is what we should be seeking for ourselves – to be turned to the One who took on Himself the punishment due to sinners, so that they might be saved.

What is Heaven Like?

Dame Jilly Cooper, a well-known novelist, died recently. I certainly would not expect to see anyone who is serious about the Seventh Commandment to be reading her novels (I say that because of what one learns from how they were described in news reports). Indeed the reading of anyone's novels is not a profitable way to pass one's time.

Queen Camilla issued a statement in which she expressed the hope that "her hereafter would be filled with . . . devoted dogs". It is amazing how people can make such statements that have absolutely no foundation in fact, especially about matters which are so tremendously important. The only basis for anything we can know about what lies beyond death is the Bible. God speaks to us through the Bible; He speaks the truth.

Nothing in the Bible even remotely suggests that there can be animals in heaven. Everything that God's people will do in heaven will be related to the worship of God. Many people enjoy their pets in this world; but everything of that nature will be left behind at death. All that is in heaven is far, far better than the good things of this life.

But what is heaven? Someone has described it as "a prepared place for a prepared people". Those who hope to get to heaven must be made fit to go there. Heaven is a holy place and "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (Revelation 21:27). In other words, nothing sinful can enter heaven – and everything sinful is defiling.

God must prepare people for heaven. He must forgive their sins, for Jesus' sake; He is the One who died in the place of sinners. To benefit from His saving work, sinners must believe in Him; that is what God calls us to do.

Also when God prepares a sinner for heaven, He starts the work of making that sinner holy. That work will be complete when the sinner enters heaven. But without that wonderful work taking place in this world, no sinner can go to heaven, that place of perfect holiness, where the perfectly holy God reigns. There will be no sinful action in heaven, no sinful word, not even a sinful thought.

If we want to reach the perfect blessedness of heaven, we must pay attention to what God has revealed; we must search the Scriptures. We must plead with God, for Christ's sake, to work in us by the Holy Spirit. We need Him to give us grace to trust in the Saviour and to make us holy.

Price £1.50