

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 91

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Number 3

God Was with David

Saul was the first king of Israel. After the prophet Samuel had anointed him as King, “God gave him another heart” (1 Samuel 10:9), and “the Spirit of God came upon Saul” (1 Samuel 11:6). This does not mean that Saul was born again; it means that the Holy Spirit so worked in him that he had some of the gifts he needed for ruling well.

Saul seemed to begin well. For instance, when an Ammonite army came against Jabesh-Gilead, a town on the east side of the River Jordan, he acted very effectively and rescued the town. But it soon became clear that King Saul was not suitable to reign over God’s people Israel. People could see that he was disobedient to what God commanded him through the prophet Samuel. Or, if he obeyed, it was only in part: he carried out some parts of what God told him and ignored the rest.

So God sent Samuel to Bethlehem. The main reason was that Samuel was to anoint a successor to Saul, but he was also to offer a sacrifice. Samuel set off for Bethlehem and came to the house of Jesse, a local man. Samuel wanted to see Jesse’s sons; one of them was to be appointed the new King.

The oldest son, Eliab, was brought to Samuel. The prophet was sure that this was the right man; he was tall and he looked so suitable. But Samuel was wrong, and God told him: “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Let us remember that the Lord sees everything about us: not only what everyone else can see but also our thinking and motives – what no one else knows.

It was the same with Jesse’s other six sons who were present; God rejected them all; they were not suitable. God knew that, even if no one else could. Then Samuel asked Jesse if he had any other sons.

Yes, there was one other son, and he was looking after the sheep. Samuel told Jesse to send for him. So David, the youngest of Jesse’s sons, was brought to Samuel, who anointed him with oil and made him the new King of Israel – though David did not act as king until Saul died.

At that time, “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him” (1 Samuel 16:14). Saul had forsaken God and his duty to God. So God, in righteous judgement, took away the help the Holy Spirit was giving to him in his work as king – not least, in defending Israel from their enemies.

“He lost his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of [Saul] being rejected by Him. Now God took His mercy from Saul. . . For when the Spirit of the Lord departs from us, all good goes.” When people grieve the Spirit by willful sin, the Spirit departs; He will not always strive with them.

“The consequence of this was that an evil spirit from God troubled him. Those that drive the good Spirit away from them become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us.” (Most of the remarks in this paragraph and the previous one are based on the writings of Matthew Henry, but those in quotation marks are taken from Henry in his own words.) Let us ask God earnestly to work in our souls by His Holy Spirit, so that we would trust in Christ Jesus as the Saviour of sinners and be consistently obedient to God and His commandments.

When David was anointed king, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David”. He was given that great blessing for the rest of his life; it was now David, not Saul, who received these gifts that were so helpful for ruling Israel.

David was not only blessed with outward gifts; he was given even more wonderful blessings. Even when he was young, the Holy Spirit came to work in his soul; he was made able to believe in the coming Saviour and to turn away from his sins in repentance. In Psalm 23, David sang of God as His Shepherd. By faith, he could be sure that he would lack nothing because God would provide for him everything he really needed. And at last he would be brought to his eternal home – “God’s house” in heaven.

If David had not believed in the coming Saviour, he would have become more and more careless about his soul, and more and more resistant to God’s claims on his obedience. He would have become especially resistant to the call of the gospel: to trust in the Messiah – the Christ – whom God would send sometime in the future to work out salvation from sin.

An evil spirit from God did come to trouble Saul. His servants advised him to send some of them to look for a skilful harp player. They expected that, when this man would play on his harp, Saul would be well again. The King took their advice and told them to look for such a man. But one of the servants told Saul about David: that he could play the harp well and that “the Lord is with him”. So David was brought to the King and played his harp, with the result that Saul recovered.

But, in every age of history, the Lord is with everyone who believes in Christ. That is true of every believer today who trusts in the Saviour. So Asaph spoke of being close to God: "I am continually with Thee". And he added, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand" (Psalm 73:23). It meant that God was taking care of Asaph, as a parent would hold a child's hand to keep the little one out of danger. So God takes care of all His children.

Jonathan Edwards was one of the best-known ministers in North America. Lying on his deathbed in 1758, he told two of his daughters to give his love to his "dear wife". (She had not yet followed him to Princeton, where he had gone to become president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University.) He hoped, he told them, that their mother would "be supported under so great a trial" as her husband's death would be, and that she "would submit cheerfully to the will of God".

Edwards knew that his death would also be difficult for his daughters. So he expressed his hope for all his family that the loss of their father would encourage them "to seek a Father [in heaven], who will never fail you". Whatever our needs, if we trust in God and God is with us, we will discover that He will continue with us in all our difficulties; He will never fail us.

In a letter to a friend, no doubt a godly man, Edwards encouraged him to believe that God would be with him. This was after his friend had suffered the sad loss of a son. Edwards wrote, "When storms and tempests arise, we may resort to Him who is a hiding place from the storm". God would be with the father who had suffered such a desolating loss, to give him the support he needed.

And so God was taking care of David, keeping him near to Himself, keeping him out of danger. Even when Saul became jealous of David, God always kept David safe. The most important thing was that God was keeping David from sinning. It is not that God keeps anyone from *all* sin; it is only when His people reach heaven that they will be kept from all sin.

Yet David did fall into serious sin; no doubt he was not, at that time, as careful as he should have been to keep near to God. But God brought him back to be near to Him; yet David experienced many difficulties while God was chastising him for his great sin.

We can finally look at David when he was near the end of his life. He said, God "hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam 23:5). So he could be sure that he would be brought safely into "God's house". God had entered into a covenant with him, and He, of course, would keep to that covenant. God will be with His children all their way through this world, until they reach heaven. Ask God to bring you near to Himself, keep you near to Him always and bring you at last to heaven.

Can the Christian Church Survive?

5. The Reformation in England and More About Britain

Another section of a Youth Conference paper. Last month's article told about Wycliffe in England and Huss in Bohemia, who resisted the false teachings of Roman Catholicism, before the Reformation. It also spoke about John Knox and the Reformation in Scotland.

What about England? The Reformation there was to some extent bound up with Henry VIII, the English King of that time. He was desperate to have a son who would rule after him; so he wanted to divorce his wife Catherine, who was unable to produce a son. The Pope refused, largely for political reasons, to allow the divorce. Then Henry took the English Church out of the Church of Rome. While Henry did not really favour Protestant teaching, it was often easier under his reign to teach the truth and to circulate the Bible in English.

We must mention the brave efforts of William Tyndale to provide English-speaking people with the Scriptures in their own language. He translated the New Testament and parts of the Old before he was put to death in what is now Belgium, where as an exile he was pursuing his life's work. The devil knows that the most effective obstacle to the success of his evil work is the Bible; so he was doing all in his power to keep it out of the hands of ordinary people, who could not read it in Latin.

Today Satan is doing all he can to make people ignore the Bible: to believe it is out of date and that it has nothing to say to them. When Henry died in 1547, he was succeeded by his young son Edward VI. He was a godly lad and did all he could to promote true religion. But his health was poor and he died in 1553.

Edward was followed by his half-sister Mary, who was a fanatical Roman Catholic and did all in her power to reverse the English Reformation. Many of the Protestant preachers fled to Europe, but Queen Mary and the Roman Catholic leaders persecuted to death many of those who stayed in England and stuck to their Protestant beliefs, particularly on the unscriptural nature of the mass. Nearly 300 men and women were burnt during Mary's reign; it was a horrible death. It would have been no surprise if Protestants at that time were asking, Can the true Church survive in England? In God's kindness, Mary was never able to wipe out Protestantism there.

She died in 1558 and was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth, another daughter of Henry VIII. Elizabeth was determined to keep the Church of England Protestant, but she was equally determined not to let the English Church become any more Protestant in its worship or government than it had

been when her father died. The result was that the Church in England was never as Reformed as the Church in Scotland.

It was in Elizabeth's reign that the party known as Puritans arose in the English Church; their strong desire was, in prayerful dependence on God's help, to make the Church purer, more conformed to the Word of God. When Charles I came to the throne in 1625, he tried to sideline the Puritans. Some of the Puritan ministers fled to the Netherlands, others to America, and some others clung on in England. But Charles lost power and was beheaded. There was then freedom for those with Puritan sympathies to worship God according to their consciences.

But in 1660, Charles' son came to the throne as Charles II. In 1662 he and his government made it impossible for true Puritans to continue in the Church of England and nearly 2000 ministers left the Church. The Government persecuted many of those, like John Bunyan, who would not conform to the restrictions of the Government—demanding, for instance, that everyone would attend the parish church, no matter how ungodly the minister was, or how unscriptural his preaching and his form of worship were.

When Charles II's brother, James II, became King in 1685 he did his best to make England and Scotland Roman Catholic. He failed and had to flee to France, and greater freedom of worship followed. In spite of all the difficulties, God preserved His Church in England although it was not at all as Reformed as one might wish.

Meanwhile in Scotland, Charles I tried to carry further the efforts his father James VI of Scotland (and later James I of England) had made to bring the Church in Scotland into line with the Church in England. These efforts, especially an attempt to impose a prayer book on the Scottish Church, led to the signing of the National Covenant in 1637.

There followed a General Assembly in Glasgow in 1638, where all the changes that had been made under James VI and Charles I were reversed; in particular, the bishops were put out of the Church, and once more the form of church government in Scotland became Presbyterian. This continued until Charles II became King. He imposed his own unscriptural way of thinking on the Church of Scotland, and the faithful ministers here had to leave their pulpits in 1662.

There followed a period when Covenanting ministers, including James Renwick, would preach well away from towns and villages, often to large congregations on the moorland. There they could often worship in safety in spite of the companies of soldiers who were pursuing them. Persecution was so bad for some time that people could be shot dead just because they were carrying a Bible. But God restored His Church in Scotland; freedom to

worship God as He should be worshipped came after William and Mary came to the thrones of Scotland and England in 1688.

James Renwick

8. Martyred

F R Daubney

This is the final section of a paper given at last year's Youth Conference. Last month's article told about Renwick continuing to preach on the moors in spite of ill health and continuing persecution.

In 1687 King James issued a proclamation which became known as the Toleration. Its purpose was to ease the way for Roman Catholics to take up positions of authority and to worship without hindrance (James II was a Roman Catholic). Included in the toleration were "moderate Presbyterians", who were allowed to meet in private houses, chapels and places of worship built for that use. Ministers who had previously been banned were permitted to resume their ministries. (In England toleration was likewise extended to people who were outside the Church of England.)

Although the King still claimed authority over the activities of the Church and Episcopal oversight was still in place, toleration was accepted in Scotland with enthusiasm. The downside was that field preaching was once again singled out for persecution.

The Societies, of course, were having nothing to do with the toleration; Episcopacy was still established by law, a Roman Catholic was on the throne and was undoubtedly trying to reverse the Protestant Reformation in Scotland. In sermon after sermon, Renwick preached against the toleration and asserted that Christ was the only Head of the Church.

He was preaching to great numbers, in spite of the bounty on his head (£100 sterling was also offered for Shields and Houston). In January 1688 Renwick preached at Braid Hills, Edinburgh, and then in Fife, and finally, on Sabbath, January 29, he preached his last sermon in Bo'ness in West Lothian. His text was Isaiah 53:1: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

He warned, "This is the great sin of Scotland, that the report of the gospel has not been believed by the generality of the people". He added that what faithful ministers of Christ, who had a commission from Him to tell them, has not been believed as it should have been. He finished by asking, "And what does this say, but that desolation and wrath is approaching? And happy are they who are preparing for the same."

He arrived back in Edinburgh on Tuesday, January 31, staying in the house of a friend on Castlehill. The owner was suspected of handling goods which had evaded customs duty, and the house was being watched. Alexander Shields comments that a man with £100 on his head was not being very careful, staying in the centre of the capital!

Renwick intended leaving in the morning, but at 7 am the house was raided and, although he managed to get away, he was captured following a chase. When he was delivered to the prison, the captain of the guard exclaimed, "What! Is this boy the Renwick that the nation has been troubled with?"

Renwick was examined several times by a group of privy councillors and the Lord Chancellor. He was asked about his assertion of the illegality of the King, a professed Roman Catholic, occupying the throne; about speaking of the evil of paying the cess (a tax specifically imposed to pay for the troops who were trying to suppress the Covenanters); and about the carrying of arms for self-defence.

He had decided to speak plainly and without evasion; so, as he agreed that those were his beliefs, those questioning him had no option under the law but to charge him with high treason. On Wednesday, February 8, he was taken to the Justiciary Court to answer the charges of denying the King's authority, declaring the payment of cess unlawful, and encouraging the carrying of arms. He was found guilty by a jury and sentenced to be hanged in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh two days later. But the Privy Council decided to delay the execution for a week.

A stream of visitors came to see Renwick, hoping to persuade him to recant, but all without success. Even the King's Advocate, Sir John Dalrymple, visited him, strongly urging Renwick to petition for his life and to recognise the King's authority. Dalrymple told him that, in his view, the report of Renwick being a Jesuit had played a large part in his condemnation. The Roman Catholics now had great influence and regarded it as a stain on their religion to let him live. It is sad that it was professed Presbyterians who were responsible for circulating this nonsense.

Renwick had been able, with the help of friends, to smuggle out a brief testimony from the prison. It concluded, "Farewell beloved sufferers and followers of the Lamb. . . . Farewell sweet societies. Farewell desirable general meetings. Farewell night wanderings, cold and weariness for Christ. Farewell sweet Bible and preaching of the gospel. . . . Farewell conflicts with a body of death. Welcome scaffold for precious Christ. Welcome heavenly Jerusalem. Welcome innumerable company of angels. Welcome general assembly and Church of the first-born. Welcome crown of glory, white robes, and song of Moses and the Lamb. And above all, welcome O Thou

blessed Trinity and One God. O Eternal One, I commit my soul into Thy eternal rest.”

On Friday, 17 February 1688 he had a meal in his cell, with his mother and sisters, and said to them: “Would I ever have thought that the fear of suffering and death could be so taken from me? It is the doing of the Lord and marvellous in our eyes.” He was then taken to the Town Council and on to the scaffold in the Grassmarket, He tried to address the people around him, but the deliberate beating of drums drowned out many of his words. Yet he sang Psalm 103, read Revelation 19 and prayed, blessing the Lord that he was honoured with the crown of martyrdom.

He was told to be quiet and go up the ladder, which he did and then prayed, “Lord, I die in the faith that Thou wilt not leave Scotland but that Thou wilt make the blood of Thy witnesses the seed of Thy Church and return again and be glorious in our land. And now, Lord, I am ready; the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, hath made herself ready.”

So James Renwick, the last of the Covenanter martyrs, the preacher to the remnant, died, aged 26 years and 3 days.

Later that same year, James II of England and VII of Scotland was deposed and fled the country. His Protestant daughter Mary, and her husband, William of Orange, came to the throne, and the persecution of the Covenanters came to an end. This change in the affairs of the nation became known as the “Glorious Revolution”. By it the religious freedoms were secured that James Renwick and the Covenanters contended for so earnestly, and Presbyterianism was re-established in Scotland.

Instead of a maligned and reproached minister we have a vindicated martyr.

When Zion’s bondage God turned back, as men that dreamed were we.

Then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody.

They ’mong the heathen said, The Lord great things for them hath wrought.

The Lord hath done great things for us, whence joy to us is brought

(Psalm 126:1,2).

A Schoolroom Conversion

Some years ago, while taking Sabbath services in one of our congregations, I had a conversation with an elderly man in that congregation. He told me that, as a boy of about 11 years of age, he had been attending the local school. One day a minister came to the school; he took the boy’s class and spoke from the Bible about an incident in Jesus’ life. The minister then applied this to the hearts of the pupils.

When the class was over, this young boy had gained such a clear view of his own spiritual condition and Jesus’ power to meet his every spiritual need, that he thought this truth would be just as plain to his fellow pupils. But when he tried to talk about these matters with them afterwards in the playground, he only got blank stares and a complete lack of interest. He could not understand how they did not see what had been made so plain to him.

This believer lived to a good old age and passed away some years ago, still trusting in the Saviour who had revealed Himself to him in that classroom so many years before. God had given him what Peter calls, “Like precious faith” (2 Peter 1:1).

(Rev) J R Tallach

For Junior Readers

“With *All* Your Heart”

In the early years of his ministry a pastor in America attended a meeting. He was to address young men who were seeking the Lord. He spoke to each of them one by one and tried to give them helpful advice and encouragement from the Bible. Twenty years later he met a minister who reminded him of that evening meeting.

“I was there, and you spoke to me,” he said. “Do you remember what you said to me?”

The Pastor said he could not remember any details of their conversation.

“Well, I will you tell you what happened,” said the younger man: “You asked me if I was seeking the Lord, and I told you that I was trying to. You then asked if my trying had done any good, and I said that I didn’t think it had.

“You said that the reason was that I had only been seeking with part of my heart. You must search with *all* your heart, you said, not just half of it. The Bible tells us, ‘Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with *all your heart*’ (Jeremiah 29:13).

“I was surprised. I thought I was seeking with all my heart. But these words, ‘with *all* your heart’, remained with me. I could not forget them. “Finally I realised that this was exactly my problem. I had been seeking for months, but only with part of my heart. Your words, ‘*All* your heart, *all* your heart,’ helped me to know more of my character and directed me into the right way!”

Is that not good advice for you too today? It is also a good verse to learn and to remember: “Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”

J van Kralingen

“All Things Work Together for Good”

A poor weaver lived in a small town in Yorkshire. Although he was poor, he was always cheerful. He started his work early in the morning, weaving lengths of cloth on his loom as he threw the shuttle back and fore, and he worked on until late in the evening – that is, when he had an order for some cloth. But his wages were low; he could not earn much money; it was very difficult for him to pay his rent and to have enough money for the food and other things that he and his family needed.

The weaver had a sister, Mary, who looked after his house after his wife died, but in several ways she was not a help to him. When she got angry, she did not control what she said. While he was diligent, she was idle; while he was patient, she complained; while he chose the Word of God for his guide, she despised holy things. Although the weaver was very patient, he sometimes found it difficult to put up with her. But his work occupied his mind and the noise from his loom and shuttle to some extent drowned out his sister's voice.

The good man, no matter what happened, always found some comfort in the Bible, and that gave him strength to go on. He also knew to go to God in prayer with his troubles. When things went well with him, he would praise God for His goodness to him; when things did not go well, he would pray to God and say, “All will be well, by and by”.

The two things the weaver valued most were his large Bible and his loom, especially his Bible. God was speaking to him through the Bible. And the loom had its own importance because, by it, he could earn some money. But he knew that everything in this world is uncertain. We never know how anything is going to turn out. Even life itself is uncertain, James tells us: “It is even a vapour” – that is, some mist – “that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (4:14).

One evening, while the weaver was busy working upstairs on his loom, Mary went out and left the door open behind her. While she was away, a thief sneaked in and stole the big Bible.

Mary asked him: “What will you do now?” She did not seem to be at all sorry for him. Clearly she did not value the Bible.

He told her meekly what he meant to do: he would “buy a small one till we can afford to get a large one. Blessed be God that we live in the land of Bibles!” It would be easy to get a new one, though it might be difficult to pay for it.

Not long afterwards, fire broke out in his work room and almost nothing was left of his loom.

Mary then asked another foolish question, this time about the loss of his loom. He told her: “It may teach me, Mary, to bear the loss of the old loom with submission [to God]. When a part of our blessings is taken away, we must value more those that remain.” He hoped that, in God’s mercy, he would be able to borrow a loom from one of his friends.

Then, although the weaver was able to buy himself a small Bible and to hire a loom, he had to face a further serious difficulty. There was a serious falling off of trade; so there would have been little work for him to do; very few people would want to buy cloth, and he would get very little money for the work that he did have.

But he did not lose his trust in God. And God provided for him. Just when things were at their worst, he heard that his old uncle who had been ill for a long time, had died. In his will, the uncle, had left him a small house in a nearby street and some money. The weaver praised God and was very thankful to Him for providing for his needs; he knew that it was God who had provided for him when things had become so difficult. But Mary thought that they should have been given more money and complained about it.

“Mary, Mary,” answered her brother, “think how little we deserve and how much we possess. I wish you could see that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God’ (Romans 8:28).”

The grocer at the corner of the street was ready to buy the house, but then he found out that it needed much more repairing than he had realised and he pulled out of the deal. The weaver reacted meekly to what happened; he would have realised that these things happened in God’s providence. Not so his sister. She said in mockery: “This is among the things that are to work together for good, I suppose”. But the weaver did not reply.

In fact, the house was worth very little. But a railway company needed the land on which it was built, to extend its railway line, and the company paid him twice as much as the grocer was going to give him at first. Yes, everything was working together in God’s providence for his good – and indeed for his comfort.

The weaver was now able to buy a new loom and also a large Bible. What pleased him most was that he found the Bible that had been stolen was offered for sale on a second-hand bookstall. He was grateful for all God’s mercies to him. He praised God for them, but he also prayed that God would keep him as humble, now that he was better off, as he had been when he was poor.

What made the difference between the weaver and his sister? The weaver believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; God gave him a new heart, so that he trusted in God as the One who could supply all his needs. Mary did not

believe in the Saviour; she had a hard, unbelieving heart; she did not trust in God for anything – not for the salvation of her soul, or for anything else.

What about you?

Adapted from The Christian Treasury for 1856

The Great Prison

2. In the Cell of Repentance

C H Spurgeon

Another section of the first chapter in Spurgeon's book, *Words of Warning for Daily Life*. It has been edited; some explanations have been added in square brackets by the Editor. In the first section, in January, Spurgeon imagined being in a prison, in the cell of sin. He described the reaction of those who were urged to flee for salvation and referred to some who were brought out of this cell. Here he continues with what he calls his "daydream".

As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison – not in the same dress which they had worn before, but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures [they had the new robes of Christ's righteousness and had been born again].

They began to talk with those who had been their fellow prisoners; and how well they spoke! They told them there was liberty to be had; that the door of the cell could open and that they might escape [for Christ makes it possible for sinners to go free]. They pleaded with their fellow-men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it was their own life that was at stake. At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, Let us be free. But no; the more these men pleaded, the harder the others seemed to grow. Indeed, I found it so when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. [Such is the power of unbelief when the gospel is proclaimed to sinners.]

I asked the guide where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free. But before their complete deliverance from jail, he said, it was necessary for them to visit a house of detention which he would show me.

He led me there. It was called the solitary cell. I had heard much of the solitary system, and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word, "Penitence" [that is, repentance], and when I opened it I found it so clean and white, and so pleasant and full of light. I said this place was more fit to be a place for prayer than a prison, and my guide told me that this is what it was originally

intended for. And he said that nothing but that iron door of unbelief, which the prisoners would persist in shutting tight, made it a prison at all.

When once that door was open, the place became so dear a room of prayer that those who were once prisoners there would come back to the cell of their own accord. They begged to be allowed to use it, not as a prison, but as a room for prayer all their lives long.

He even told me that someone was heard to say, when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was that, in heaven, there would be no cell of penitence. Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms; here Peter also wept bitterly; and here the woman who was a sinner washed the feet of her Lord. But at this time I was thinking of it as a prison, and I saw that the person in the cell did so consider it.

I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because he was born in a Christian nation. But he learned that he must be saved alone if saved at all. He had been accustomed before then to go up to the house of God in company, and thought that going there was enough. But now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threatening smote his conscience.

I remember I have read in the Old Book I quoted just now [the Bible]: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

"And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."

I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned often, and now and then mixed some words of unbelief with his words of repentance. If it was not for these unbelieving words, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges. It was unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell, I say it had been a place of prayer for heaven, and not a sad place for mourning and lamentation.

As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophesied for the future and moaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly, and destroyed his soul eternally. Everyone might see how foolish

his fears were, for as I looked round this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside [knocking means praying]. I saw too that if the man had only the courage to use it, there was a shining one standing ready outside who would open the door at once. Indeed I saw that there was a secret spring called faith, and if the man would but touch it, even with just a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open.

Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on its two side posts the marks of blood [as with the Israelites' doors in Egypt], and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open, and he came out from the cell of his solitary repentance to rejoice in the Lord, who had put away his sin and cleansed him for ever from all iniquity.

So I spoke to this penitent, and called him to trust in the blood [in Jesus Christ, who died for sinners], and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner. But I learned this: that no words of mine could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with just a little unbelief; it is the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

The Girl Whom God Used

He was a rich nobleman – a Count – in Germany. He had often visited cities such as Berlin, Frankfurt and Paris, which probably at that stage were centres of unbelief – denying that the Bible is a revelation from God. He was known as an infidel, someone who did not believe the authority of the Bible.

He had often talked with worldly men and had read books which argued against the Bible. On his travels he had developed a bitter hatred against Christianity and, when he returned home, he gave himself up to sinful pleasures. He did not try to hide his unbelief; indeed, he tried to make other people as unbelieving as himself. He kept up a connection with the church, but that did him no good because the minister believed just as little of the Bible as he did.

One day the Count was out for a walk in his grounds when he heard a girl singing nicely in a garden. He went to find out who was singing. When he saw her, he was sorry for her as she had tears in her eyes, and because her clothes showed that she belonged to a very poor family; probably they were very worn.

“Why are you crying?” he asked her, “Are you sick?”

“No”, she answered, “but I am crying because I am happy – so happy.”

The Count was surprised; he asked, "How can you cry if you are happy?" "Because I love the Lord Jesus Christ so much."

"Why do you love Him so much?" And his unbelief made him add, "He has been dead a long time. He can do you no good." He was no doubt trying to infect the girl with his unbelief.

But his unbelief had no power over her God-given faith. So she answered, "No, He is not dead. He lives in heaven."

"And even if this is true, what benefit is it to you? If He could help you, He would give money to your mother so that she could buy you better clothes." Again the Count was speaking in his usual rebellious rejection of everything the Bible says.

But the girl, believing what God says in the Bible, replied to him: "I do not wish for money, but the Lord Jesus Christ will take me one day to Himself in heaven".

"It is your granny or some such person who makes you believe this."

"No, no; it is true and it makes me glad." And the girl's eyes again filled with tears.

Her simple replies and her happiness in poverty struck the Count's mind with great force. He gave her some money and then walked away. When he reached home, and also for some days afterwards, two things filled the Count's mind.

First, he asked himself how such thoughts could have found their way into the girl's mind. He knew that neither the local minister nor the teacher in the school would have taught her about these things; they did not believe them. Then, second, he wondered how a child who was just 8 could be filled with such sincere love; he had noticed that her love was obviously sincere, and so was her happiness. He could not understand.

Then he remembered something else. After setting out on a journey eight or nine years before, he decided to go to a service one evening – either through curiosity or just to pass the time. He thought the preacher's subject was very odd: that the Lord honours those who profit by what a child says. At that stage in his life, he considered the idea ridiculous. But after speaking with the girl, he was now thinking again and again about profiting by what a child says.

Now the Count was more serious than before, but he avoided talking about religion as he used to do. The minister was often in the Count's house, but now he could not understand why the Count no longer wanted to talk against religion. And the Count did not want to talk about his conversation with the girl, in case the minister would make fun of him.

A week later, he was on a journey to the border of Austria. He reached a

village where he again attended church. The preacher spoke on the words, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matthew 21:16). After the sermon, the preacher prayed earnestly for the children and young people.

The service made a great impression on the Count. He was moved to tears, and he believed that he would remember it throughout eternity; he felt, he said, "something which I had never experienced in my life before".

When Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus, had met the risen Saviour, he asked Him: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Now the Count asked the same question, and later he said, "I felt a calmness which words cannot express". He used to react with contempt when he heard the name of Jesus; now he realised that the name *Jesus* had become infinitely precious to him and that he had obtained mercy. He was astonished.

Some time after all this, someone wrote about the great change that took place in the Count's life. He said that the Count went on through life admiring the ways of God's providence; no doubt the Count was thinking of the ways that God used to turn him from his unbelief. This writer remarked that probably no learned arguments would have had any power to stop him rejecting the Bible. But the Lord began to turn him as a result of listening to a young girl. Yes, as the preacher said, the Lord does honour those who pay attention to what a godly child says.

For Younger Readers

A Happy Man

Long, long ago, there was a man called John Baile. One day he was going to somewhere in London to preach there.

He started thinking about God's love to him. He wondered that God had called him to be one of His children, when there were thousands of others whom He had not called.

And these thousands of people were stronger than He was; they were wiser than He was; they knew more about many things than He did. But they did not know God; they were going on in sin.

Then John Baile burst into tears. What was wrong? Nothing was wrong. He was just so happy that God was so good to him, though he could do nothing to deserve God's goodness.

When John Baile visited others and he was going away, he usually told them words from the Bible so that they could think on them afterwards. Here are words for you: "God be merciful to me a sinner". Try to learn them.

Looking Around Us

Church Closures

Clydebank is a town just to the west of Glasgow. One of the Roman Catholic churches there is to be joined up with another, and a petition has been circulated asking that moves to bring the two congregations together be stopped; a few days ago, more than 830 people had signed the petition. One problem is that, in Clydebank and other places, old buildings need expensive repairs. Another problem is that “attendance figures are poor”; in other words, few people are coming to the services.

These problems, of course, affect many Protestant churches, and the result is that a lot of them are closing down. Indeed, the Church of Scotland has a big programme of closing church buildings, usually through merging congregations. But, sadly, many Church of Scotland congregations are not doing anything useful, because they have no gospel message for the declining numbers who attend. The ministers of these congregations do not tell their hearers that they are sinners who need salvation. Nor do they tell them that sinners can be saved from the consequences of their sins in a lost eternity – they can be saved because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took human nature and died. The gospel, which means “good news”, is: “Whosoever believeth in Him [shall] not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

While there are very serious problems with the Church of Scotland, there are even bigger problems with Roman Catholic buildings. Their main purpose is to provide a place where mass can be said. And the mass is claimed to be a re-enactment of the once-for-all sacrifice that Christ offered on Calvary. It is a blasphemous claim. God accepted Christ’s one sacrifice; so it does not need to be repeated. His rising from the dead tells us that He bore away all the sins that were laid on Him; so death could not hold Him; He had endured the full punishment for all these sins.

The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many” (9:28). No one has any right to repeat His sacrifice; in any case it is impossible to do so. No priest has the power to change the wafer and the wine into the body and soul of Christ’s humanity – and into His divinity also. They may claim to have the power, but they do not, and it is blasphemous to make that claim. No human being has the power to change any substance into the Person of Christ; besides, the claim is absurd.

One important matter to bear in mind about the Roman Catholic Church is that the Bible warns about it. It is the antichrist; in other words, its head, the pope, claims to act in the place of Christ. But Christ has given no authority to any pope to do so. Again it is a blasphemous claim.

UK Youth Conference 2026

Arrangements (God willing)

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

Dates: Tuesday, April 14, to Thursday, April 16.

Chairman: Rev K D Macleod.

Lower Age Limit: 16 years old.

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

Programme

Tuesday, April 14

2.30 pm **Law and Gospel**

A Biblical Perspective

by *Rev J B Jardine*

7.00 pm **Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine**

Preachers of the Gospel in Eighteenth-Century Scotland

by *Mr Jan Freeke*

Wednesday, April 15

9.30 am **Formation of the Free Presbyterian Church**

Why the Stand Was Made in 1893

by *Rev A W MacColl*

2.30 pm **Guided Tour to Dunfermline**

conducted by *Dr R J Dickie*

7.00 pm **Creation**

God's Work; It Is not by Chance

by *Rev K D Macleod*

Thursday, April 16

9.30 am **Sarah**

Lessons from Her Life

by *Mr R W van Kralingen*

Price £1.50