

THE SHARK'S SECRET

and 50 Other Stories

Compiled by
R. Cameron-Smith



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Foreword

MOST OF THE stories in this book were originally published in the Southern Presbyterian Church Youth Magazine. As there are presently few sound Christian books for young people, these stories are now published in a separate book. The stories are derived from various sources, for which thankful acknowledgement is made.

It is the prayer and hope of the publishers that these stories may be blessed of the Lord to teach children about the true and living God. It is hoped that the accounts of the conversion of others to Christ may encourage each one to seek and pray to the Lord as they did. Then they too will experience the Lord's grace and salvation, as did those whose stories are recorded in this book.

“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)

1. Faithful Olympic champion

THE 1924 OLYMPIC Games were held in Paris. At these games there was a Scottish runner named Eric Liddell who was the favourite for the 100 metre race. Liddell was a sincere Christian who sought to walk in God's ways. To his sorrow he learned that the heats for the 100 metre race were to be run on the Lord's day, so Liddell refused to run and was left out of that race. He could, however, run in the 400 metre race to be held on another day, but Liddell was not good in this event.

On the morning of the final, another Christian in the team gave a note to Liddell, who said he would open it at the race stadium. The note read, "In the old book (the Bible) it says, He that honours Me I will honour. Wishing you the best success always." This was a quote from 1 Samuel 2:30. This text really spoke to Liddell's heart and encouraged him.

In that 400 metre race, Liddell not only won, but set a new world record. He had honoured God by remembering to keep His day holy, and God honoured him by giving him strength and determination to win. Eric Liddell later became a missionary and served the Lord faithfully in China.

* * *

A Sabbath well kept
Brings a week of content
And health for the toils of tomorrow,
But a Sabbath profaned
Whatsoever is gained
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.

2. The pigs and the beans

EARLY LAST CENTURY, a young man was preparing to leave England permanently and sail to India. His Christian friend was very anxious that this young man should hear the message of the gospel of Christ before he sailed. The young man agreed to go to church with him each Sunday until the boat sailed.

They went to a number of churches to hear various preachers, but each time the gospel was not clearly preached, and the young man was not impressed with what he heard.

At last they went to hear a very unusual preacher, named Rowland Hill. Mr Hill's subject was, "Temptation to Sin." In his sermon he told a story of how he saw a man leading some pigs to the slaughter house. The pigs all eagerly followed the man, even though they were going to the place where they would be killed.

Mr Hill said that he was puzzled for a while, until he discovered the reason. The man leading the pigs had a bag of beans. Every few steps he dropped some beans. The pigs eagerly followed him to get more beans, but they did not know that they were being led to the slaughter house.

Mr Hill likened these beans to the temptations of the devil. He places many things before sinners to tempt them to sin, but they forget that they are being led to hell and destruction.

After the sermon, the young man was deeply convicted. He realised that this was a picture of his own life; he was following the pleasures of sin, and would be lost forever unless he was saved.

This young man repented of his evil ways and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and became a true Christian.

3. Persecuting times

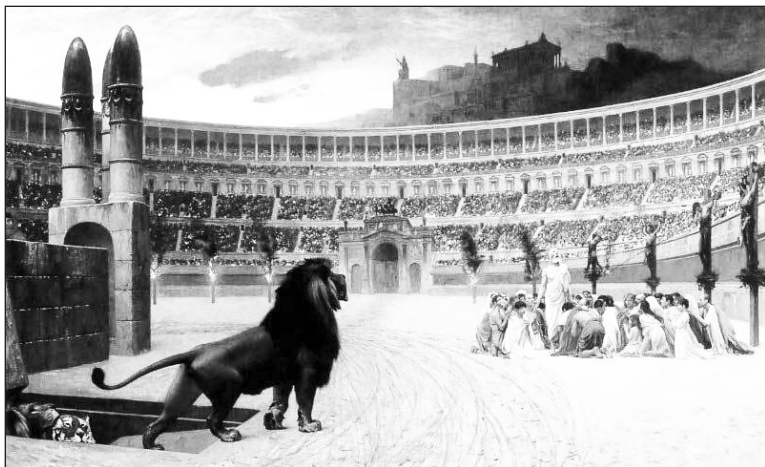
WE LIVE IN a land where there is not much persecution of those who are Christians. Probably the most you have to suffer is that someone laughs at you or does not want to have anything to do with you. But this has not always been so. Often God's people have suffered greatly for their faith in Christ.

In about 116 AD a Roman governor named Tacitus recorded how the Emperor Nero of Rome falsely accused the Christians and persecuted them.

In the year 64 AD a great fire swept through the city of Rome causing great damage. Soon rumours spread that Nero himself had set fire to the city. Nero tried to stop the rumours and clear his name. First of all he said that the gods must be angry with the city, so he ordered many prayers and services be made to the gods to turn away their anger. But still the rumours spread that he had burned the city.

Then Nero blamed the Christians in Rome. These Christians were already hated by many of the people of the city.

Nero arrested those who confessed they were Christians first. Then on the report of others, he arrested a great number of those who were said to be Christians. Tacitus then records how they were persecuted and put to death: "They were covered with wild beasts skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and gave an exhibition in his Circus, mixing with the crowd in the habit (costume) of a charioteer, or mounted in his car." However when the people



saw the patience and faithfulness of the Christians in their sufferings, they were moved to feel pity for them. The people realised that these Christians were not suffering for the good of Rome but because of the wickedness and anger of Nero the Emperor.

Let us pray that we might be faithful to the Lord no matter what persecutions come upon us.

4. Where are the bad ones?

ONE DAY A father took his young son for a walk through a graveyard. The father read out the names of the people on the head-stones and what was written about them. On every grave he read something like, “Dearly beloved husband of” or “Forever with the Lord” or “Rest in peace”

The young son listened very intently to what his father read. At last he asked, “Dad, where do they bury all the bad people?” “What do you mean?” asked the father. “Well,” replied the son, “you have only read out good things about all these people.”

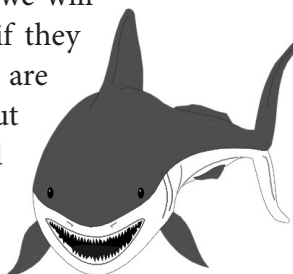
Let us remember that it is not important who men praise or say are at rest when they die. But it is important who God says are blessed and at peace. He has said that only those who die trusting in the Lord are blessed and enter into Heaven.



5. The shark's secret

WE ARE TOLD in the Bible, “Be sure your sins will find you out.” (Numbers 32:23) This means that our sins will always be found out, and we will be judged and punished for them if they are not forgiven by the Lord. Sins are sometimes found out in this life, but all of them will be found out and judged on the great judgment day.

Sometimes there have been very strange events that have brought to



light the evils which people have done. One of these was by a very large shark.

About two hundred years ago, Spanish pirates roamed the seas to attack other ships, to rob them, burn them, and even kill those who were on board. On one occasion a sailing ship, which was thought to have pirates on board, was being chased by a British naval vessel. In order to escape being found out, the captain of the pirate ship took all the papers that showed where he had been and what he had done, and rolled them up, tied them with string and threw them into the ocean.

Soon the naval vessel caught the ship and escorted it back to port in Kingston, Jamaica. When a complete search was made of the ship, no evidence could be found that the captain and his crew were pirates, and he would have to be set free.

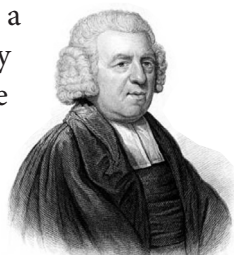
However, there was another ship sailing near the coast of Jamaica. The crew saw a dead bullock in the water surrounded by many sharks, and the captain decided to try to catch one of them. They sailed near the bullock and soon a very large shark was hooked and dragged on board. When the shark was opened, it had a roll of paper tied with string in its stomach. When it was unrolled, it was found to be the records of a pirate ship. The captain sailed into port and gave the papers to the authorities.

Can you imagine how amazed the pirates were when they were shown the records of their evil deeds! The captain had thought that he had buried these papers in the depth of the ocean, never to be seen again. But he was found out and judged for his sins. These papers are said to be still preserved in the museum in Jamaica.

Many people, like these pirates, imagine that their sins are hidden and forgotten. But they will be found out, if not in this life, then certainly on the day of judgment.

6. Sure faith

JOHN NEWTON (1725-1807) was once a slave trader, but the Lord wonderfully saved him and he became a minister of the gospel at Olney in England. In Newton's letters, he tells how he visited a young lady who had a strong and sure faith in Christ and in the Word of God.



Newton says, "I visited her in her last illness, about two years ago. She was a sober, prudent person, of plain sense. She could read her Bible, but had read little beside. Her knowledge of the world was nearly confined to the parish; for I suppose she was seldom, if ever, twelve miles from home in her life. She had known the gospel about seven years before the Lord visited her with a lingering consumption, which at length removed her to a better world.

"A few days before her death, I had been praying by her bed-side, and in prayer thanked the Lord that He gave her now to see that she had not followed cunningly devised fables. When I had finished, she repeated that word. 'No,' she said, 'not cunningly devised fables; these are realities indeed; I feel their truth; I feel their comfort. O tell my friends, tell my acquaintances, tell inquiring souls, tell poor sinners what Jesus has done for my soul. Tell them, that now, in the time of need, I find Him my beloved and my friend, and as such I commend Him to them.'

"She then fixed her eyes steadfastly upon me, and said, as well as I can recollect: 'Sir, you are highly favoured in being called to preach the gospel. I have often heard you

with pleasure; but now I see that all you have said, or can say, is, comparatively, but little. Nor, till you come into my situation, and have death and eternity full in your view, will it be possible to conceive the vast weight and importance of the truth you declare. Oh, Sir, it is a serious thing to die! No words can express what is needful to support the soul in the solemnity of the dying hour.’

“I believe that it was the next day when I visited her again. After talking for a while she said in a very solemn voice, ‘Are you sure I cannot be mistaken?’ I answered without hesitation, ‘Yes, I am sure; I am not afraid to say, my soul for yours, that you are right.’ She paused a little, then replied, ‘You say true; I know I am right. I feel that my hope is fixed upon the Rock of Ages: I know in Whom I have believed. Yet, if you could see with my eyes, you would not wonder at my question. But the approach of death presents a prospect, which is till then hidden from us, and cannot be described.’”

This young lady died full of hope and confidence in Christ.

7. Gambling

ALL AROUND US there are many opportunities to gamble or bet.

We often hear that for just a few dollars we could become very rich, and occasionally we hear of someone who has won a great sum of money.

Have you ever asked what is really wrong with gambling? You may have felt tempted to bet on something or buy a

lottery ticket and asked yourself if it would really be wrong to do so.

There are good reasons why it is wrong to gamble.

1. You can only win if other people lose. In every case there are many losers, but only one or two winners. You can only win because many others lose.



2. The only ones who win all the time are those who run the lottery. They decide how many tickets are sold and how much money is won, and plan so that a good profit comes to themselves.
3. Gambling creates many poor people. We only read about the winners, but while one person is made wealthy, thousands are made poorer and often they gamble away all their money and possessions.
4. Gambling offers us great wealth for no honest work. God requires us to honestly labour for the things that we have, but gambling offers us much for which we have not laboured at all.
5. Gambling often becomes a dreadful habit that is hard to break. We often hear of “compulsive gamblers.” These are people who cannot resist the temptation to gamble. The desire to gamble sometimes becomes so strong that people lose their jobs, their money, and their homes, and their whole lives are ruined by the urge to gamble.
6. Gambling comes from the sin of greed or

covetousness. The Tenth Commandment tells us, “Thou shalt not covet.” It forbids greed, and requires us to be content with the things God has given us and to work honestly for those things we have.

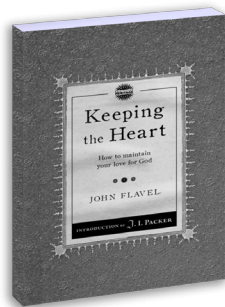
So there are very good reasons why we should avoid gambling.

8. The value of good books

BOOKS CAN BE read many times and may last sometimes for hundreds of years. Have you ever thought of how valuable and important good Christian books are? There are many good books available for us to read.

History records some lovely stories of how God has blessed the reading of good books.

John Flavel (1628-1691) was one of the Puritan preachers in England. He had a bookseller friend, Mr Boulter, who sold the various books which Mr Flavel wrote. One day, in 1673, a very well dressed man came into Mr Boulter’s shop and asked for some books on play-acting. Mr Boulter told him that he did not have any such books, but showed him Mr Flavel’s little book called “Keeping the Heart” and urged him to read it. The man glanced quickly at a few pages and said, “What a damnable fanatic



he was who wrote this book.” Mr Boulter continued to urge him to buy and read it because it would do him much good, and not to speak so harshly against the book.

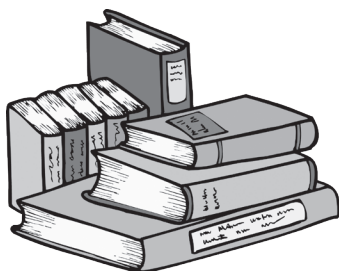
At last the man agreed to buy it, but said he would not read it. “What will you do then with the book?” asked Mr Boulter. “I will tear it up and burn it,” replied the man. Mr Boulter then told him that he should not have the book if that was so. At last the man said that he would read the book. Mr Boulter told him that if he was not happy with the book when he had read it, then he would refund the money.

About a month later the man visited the shop again. His whole appearance showed that he was a changed man. He said to Mr Boulter, “Sir, I thank you for putting this book into my hands; I bless God that I ever came into your shop.” He then bought a hundred copies of Flavel’s book, and said that he would give them to the poor if they could not afford to pay for them. Then he left the shop praising God for His goodness and mercy to him.

Let us read good books ourselves, and also seek to encourage others to read them. And remember that God has given us His Word in a book, the Bible, which is the best book of all.

* * *

“Study to show thyself approved unto God.”
(2 Timothy 2:15)



9. Saved by Christ's sufferings

A STORY FROM ANCIENT history illustrates how we are saved and forgiven because the Lord Jesus suffered for us.

Shortly after the famous battle of Marathon (490 BC) when the Athenians defeated the great Persian army and kept their freedom, a man of Athens was charged with a very serious crime. This man was brought before the court to be tried. There was no way he could escape from being punished because the evidence was so clear and strong against him.

This condemned man had a brother who had fought bravely at the battle of Marathon and had received many severe wounds. This brother came to the Court and asked if he could speak for his brother. When he was asked what evidence he could give to show that his brother should not be found guilty and punished, he simply lifted up his mutilated arms, which were no more than stumps; his arms had been cut off in battle.

The Court realised that he was the hero who had fought so bravely to defend the city, and he was pleading that his brother be pardoned and released because of what he had suffered for the city. His wounds were the only plea he made for why his brother should be released.

The Court was greatly moved by this man's plea. They immediately dismissed the charges against his brother and he was allowed to go away a free man.

In a similar way the Lord Jesus presents His sufferings and death for us to God the Father. Although we are guilty of many sins, yet for Christ's sake, because of what He has done, we are forgiven and set free.

10. A strange conversion

GEORGE WHITEFIELD (1714-1770) was a very famous preacher in England and America. He travelled from town to town, often preaching several times each day. Thousands of people flocked to hear him, but some people laughed and mocked him.

At Rotherham a number of young men met in a tavern to mock Whitefield. They made bets to see who could mimic his sermons the best. Each one had to stand on a table, open the Bible and pretend to preach like Whitefield, while the others laughed and clapped at his performance.

A young man named Thorpe was the last to act. He jumped onto the table saying, "I will beat you all." He opened the Bible and read the first verse he saw, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3) Suddenly he realised the solemn truth of the text, and was deeply convicted of his lost condition. He tried to preach, but instead of making fun, he spoke very seriously. Great quietness and solemnity spread over the whole group, and those who had come to scoff went away in tears, deeply troubled about their sins.

Thorpe was wonderfully saved by the Lord. He later became a faithful preacher of the gospel and laboured for many years in the ministry, and came to be a friend of George Whitef¹



11. The seed is the Word of God

A SCOTTISH BOY HAD a godly mother who faithfully taught him the truths of the Bible. This boy hated the Bible and did not want to learn about God. However, his mother did not give up; she read the Bible to him and spoke to him about Christ and salvation.

As soon as he was old enough, this lad left home and became a seaman. For many years he lived an evil life and had no thoughts about God.

Eventually, his ship sailed to America, where he became very sick and was admitted to hospital. While in hospital he was visited by a godly minister who spoke to him about God's Word. But he swore at the minister and told him to go away. Noticing that his name was Scottish, the minister realised that he would probably know the Psalms, so he quoted to him Psalm 103:13:

Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship Him in fear.

These were the very words that his mother had often sung and quoted to him. The man began to weep and to acknowledge that he was a sinner and needed forgiveness. This man was truly converted and lived the rest of his life as a godly man.

This illustrates that God's Word is like seed. When we hear it, it is sown in our minds. It may lie there for many years, but God may bring that Word again to our remembrance and

bless it to our hearts, and through it we may be saved. It is very important for us to hear God's Word and to hide it in our hearts. Let us pray that we might never hate God's Word, but receive it with faith and love in our hearts.

12. The Indian interpreter

IN 1744 DAVID Brainerd (1718-1747) went to preach to the American Indians. However, he could not speak to them as he did not know their language. Brainerd lived among the Indians - he had his own wigwam, slept on a bundle of straw, and ate their food, but it was a long time before he could talk to them. The Indians among whom Brainerd lived were very wicked. They had many evil ways and had learned many more evils from the white settlers who had recently come to America.

Brainerd could only speak to the Indians by an interpreter. An interpreter is a person who knows two languages; that person hears what you say in one



language and tells others in a different language. Brainerd could not find an Indian who was a Christian to be an interpreter for him.

At last Brainerd found an Indian named Moses Tinda Tautamy who could act as an interpreter. Moses Tinda was a drunkard, but he kept sober when he interpreted for David Brainerd. He was not at all interested in the sermons and

prayers that he heard and spoke again to his own people. So he was not very suitable for this work and took no interest in trying to make the other Indians understand the message which Brainerd was preaching.

One day, however, Brainerd was preaching to some white people and Moses was present. As he was not required to interpret, he just sat and listened. He was very interested in the sermon. The next day he talked to Brainerd about the sermon and he began to pray. He was not a strong person and one night he was ill in his wigwam and could not sleep. He imagined that he was trying to climb up a steep mountain to Heaven but the way was covered with thorns and each time he slipped to the bottom again.

He imagined that he became despairing and was about to give up, when he thought of the Lord Jesus and how He has made a way to Heaven and to God by dying on the cross. He then prayed to the Lord for forgiveness and mercy.

From that time Moses Tinda became a true Christian and was more than an interpreter. He was a helper and became a missionary himself. When Brainerd preached to the Indians, the interpreter would put his own heart and love into the words. The Indians listened intently for they knew that Moses was a changed man. After this change in the life of Moses Tinda, many of the Indians became Christians. A wonderful work of God's grace occurred among the Indians and more than a hundred and thirty of them were saved. This brought much joy to David Brainerd and great glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

* * *

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

13. A glorious conversion

IN 1792 REV William Robinson, a Presbyterian minister, went to preach in the thinly populated areas of Virginia and North Carolina.

At one place he pitched a tent for the meetings and invited the people to attend. In that area was a man named Austin, who was half Indian. This man had a violent temper, a foul tongue, and was always ready to pick a fight with anyone.

Austin's wife wanted to attend the meetings but he sternly forbade her. However, he decided to go along himself but not listen. He lay down on some leaves outside the tent and pretended to be asleep.

Rev Robinson announced his text, "Awake thou that sleepest." (Ephesians 5:14) Austin was startled by these words. He arose and slowly walked towards the preacher, listening to every word he said. He stood near the preacher and heard the whole sermon; tears were streaming down his dark face.

After the sermon he went home, but would not go inside. He walked to and fro in front of the house until midnight in great distress. Then he went inside and told his wife that he was a great and lost sinner and that the preacher had told him things that he had never heard before.

For two days he was in great distress. Then the Lord revealed to him the way of forgiveness and salvation through Christ. Austin was truly saved and became as meek and gentle as a lamb. Later he was a great help to many who were troubled about their sins and the way of salvation. People would send for him from far away places, asking him to come and speak to them and to pray with them.

14. The little servant girl's compassion

WHEN WE READ 2 Kings chapter 5, it may at first seem to be only telling us about Naaman, the mighty Syrian soldier, who was healed of his leprosy. However, if we look closely, perhaps the most important character in the story is the little Jewish servant girl. We are not told this little girl's name. But from this simple little servant girl, we can learn a great deal about the character and qualities of a child of God.

The Jewish girl had been captured by the Syrian soldiers, who were led by their captain, Naaman. The soldiers had taken her away from her father and mother to be a servant in their country, Syria. No doubt this was a dreadful experience for this little girl and she would have been very lonely in a strange country. But this did not cause her to despair and give up. In fact the strength of character and fine qualities that she possessed must have been noticed soon after she had been captured, because the wife of Naaman took her to be her maid.

This great lady could have chosen any number of Syrian girls to wait on her, but she chose this little captive girl to serve her.

Why did she choose the Jewish girl? Well, firstly, the little girl had shown that she could be obedient. Important and great ladies can often be very demanding and no doubt they expected strict obedience from their servants. Anything less would see them quickly disposed of. This little girl knew how to obey.

We also learn from the passage that the little girl was loving

and compassionate, and possessed a spirit of forgiveness towards those who had treated her wrongfully. The little girl had been cruelly taken from the love and care of her mother and father at a very young age. She was now surrounded by strangers in a strange land, without any hope of ever seeing her family again. Perhaps worst of all was the fact that she was now forced to serve in the very house of the man whose soldiers had treated her and her people so cruelly. Yet in spite of all her hardships, she was still able to find compassion and forgiveness for her master Naaman.

Naaman may have been a great and mighty captain of the Syrian armies; however, he was not able to escape the dreadful disease of leprosy. It was Naaman's anguish caused by this disease that prompted kindness and concern from the little maid. Forgiveness and compassion are both evident in her pleas as she urges her mistress to encourage Naaman to visit the prophet Elisha for healing.

It would have been so easy for the little girl to secretly rejoice at her master's illness, and to hope that he would soon die. However she showed that true kindness and care that should be in the heart of every Christian.

We also learn from the story that the little girl was very truthful. No doubt if just any little girl had made such claims about Elisha's ability to heal leprosy, such claims might have been ignored as foolishness. However, this Jewish girl had already clearly displayed qualities of honesty and integrity, so much so that Naaman was prompted to act on her suggestion and travel into another country to seek the much-needed healing from Elisha the prophet of God.

We can learn much from this little girl. She was blessed with a meek and quiet spirit, and her obedience, kindness and truthfulness show evidence of her being a true child of God. Read the story in 2 Kings chapter 5.

15. Six short rules for Christians

Brownlow North

1. Never neglect daily private prayer; and when you pray, remember that God is present, and that He hears your prayers. (Hebrews 11:6)
2. Never neglect daily private Bible-reading and, when you read, remember that God is speaking to you and that you are to believe and act upon what He says. I believe all backsliding begins with the neglect of these two rules. (John 5:39)
3. Never let a day pass without trying to do something for Jesus. Every night reflect on what Jesus has done for you, and then ask yourself, "What am I doing for Him?" (Matthew 5:13-16)
4. If you are in doubt as to a thing being right or wrong, go to your room and kneel down and ask God's blessing upon it. (Colossians 3:17) If you cannot do this, it is wrong. (Romans 14:23)
5. Never take your Christianity from Christians, or argue that because such and such people do so and so, that therefore you may. (2 Corinthians 10:12) You are to ask yourself, "How would Christ act in my place?" and strive to follow Him. (John 10:27)
6. Never believe what you feel, if it contradicts God's Word. Ask yourself, "Can what I feel be true if God's Word is true?" If **both** cannot be true, believe God, and make your own heart the liar. (Romans 3:4; 1 John 5:10-11)

16. David Livingstone, the missionary

DAVID LIVINGSTONE WAS born in Scotland on the 19th of March 1813. He had to leave school and work in a mill when he was just ten years of age. But he always had a book beside him, and often studied at night till twelve o'clock.

When Livingstone was seventeen years old, he was converted by the grace of God. He then dedicated his life to be a missionary.

Livingstone studied to be a doctor and a minister, and in 1841 he went to Africa to preach the gospel. He explored much of Africa, travelling about 55,000 kilometres, mostly on foot. He was very brave and laboured hard to treat the diseases of the Africans and help them in other ways.

In one village, the lions were attacking the cattle and terrorising the people. Livingstone urged the people to kill one of the lions and then the rest would go away. He went out with the men to hunt the lions,



but they escaped. As he was returning home, he saw a large lion on a hill very close to him. Livingstone raised his gun and shot the lion, but did not kill it. Before he could reload his gun, the lion jumped on him, knocking him to the ground. The lion grabbed his arm just below the shoulder and shook him terribly. Livingstone wrote later, "He

shook me like a dog would a rat.” The lion roared loudly and Livingstone almost lost consciousness, thinking that he was going to die.

One of the natives managed to shoot the lion. It let Livingstone go and pounced on the native, biting his thigh. But soon the lion fell down dead from the bullets it had received. Livingstone’s left arm was broken, and as it could not be set properly, it was disfigured for the rest of his life.

The Lord delivered David Livingstone from the lion’s mouth just as He had delivered Daniel from the lion’s den. Both of these men trusted God to keep them from danger and the Lord did not fail them.

17. David Livingstone, lost in Africa

AFTER DAVID LIVINGSTONE had been a missionary for over thirty years, he became lost to the world. For over two years not a word was heard from him. No one knew where he was or whether he was still alive. Most people thought that he was dead.

But Livingstone had gone into the heart of Africa exploring the rivers. He became sick and hungry, and his feet were sore and worn. Some of his servants turned against him and the local tribespeople thought that he was a slave trader and sought to kill him. Three times in one day he narrowly escaped death; one spear was so close that it grazed his neck. When Livingstone returned to his camp, he found that his

medicines and supplies had been stolen. He had little or no food and he wasted away to a mere skeleton. Later he described himself as “a mere wrinkle of bones.” There seemed no hope at all, and Livingstone thought he would die.

But God works in wonderful and strange ways. At this time, there was in Paris a man named James Gordon Bennett. He was the editor of a paper called the *New York Herald*. He was interested in Livingstone’s life and work, and thought that it would be a good story for his newspaper. He contacted the travelling correspondent of the paper, Henry Stanley, and asked him to lead an expedition to find Livingstone. Mr Bennett paid Mr Stanley all the money he required, and he set out for Africa with 200 men and all the necessary equipment.

During the voyage, Stanley nearly lost his life. When he arrived in Africa, there were great dangers from the tribesmen, who fought with his men, thinking they were slave traders.

One day, when Livingstone had almost given up all hope of being rescued, one of his servants came running into his tent saying excitedly, “An Englishman, I see him.” Henry Stanley came and with open arms said, “Doctor Livingstone, I presume?” Livingstone was so pleased to receive good food and care, and some new clothes. Soon he recovered and felt well again.

For four months Stanley and his men stayed with Livingstone. They talked over all of Livingstone’s work, and travelled to many places together. At last Stanley wished to return home. He urged Livingstone to go with him, but Livingstone felt that his work was not yet finished. So Stanley and his men said goodbye to Livingstone for the last time, and returned to Paris. Livingstone returned to his work as a missionary among the Africans.

Two days later was Livingstone’s birthday, and he wrote

in his diary, “I again dedicate my whole life to thee. Grant, O gracious Father, that ere the year is gone, I may finish my work.”

The Lord was with David Livingstone and enabled him to preach the Word of God to the African people again.



18. David Livingstone, his death

AFTER DAVID LIVINGSTONE said goodbye to Henry Stanley, he set out on another journey to explore some lakes and to discover the source of the River Nile. The journey was hard and the weather was cold and wet. They had to wade through rivers and marshlands, and survive with little food. Livingstone became very ill and was laid in bed in his tent.

One morning a faithful servant found Livingstone kneeling beside his bed. He was quiet and still, and when the servant touched him, he realised that he was dead. He had died praying beside his bed.

Instead of burying Livingstone's body in Africa, his faithful servants tenderly cared for it. They buried his heart under a large tree, then dried his body in the sun for fourteen days and wrapped it in cloth. With bark stripped from trees,

they made a coffin, which they bound around with canvas. Then they tied the body to a long pole that could be carried by two men, and carried it across many rivers, over hills, and through jungles to get to a sea port at Zanzibar. This trek took them many months. They had to fight off attackers and creep past villages. Eventually, the faithful servants boarded a ship at Zanzibar, and at last brought the body to England.

A funeral service was held in Westminster Abbey in London on 18 April 1874, with a vast congregation and many leaders present. Livingstone's body was laid to rest beneath the large marble stone floor of Westminster Abbey. On the stone was written, "Brought by faithful hands, over land and sea. Here rests David Livingstone. Missionary, Traveller, Philanthropist. Born March 13th, 1813. Died May 1st, 1873. For thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets and to abolish the slave trade."

Let us pray that we may have the same love and zeal to serve the Lord as David Livingstone did.

* * *

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." (Matthew 28:19)



19. The astronomer of Pisa

GALILEO GALILEI WAS born at Pisa, Italy, in 1564. As a boy he was bright and had a very enquiring mind. He entered university to study medicine, but later turned to science and astronomy.

It is said that on one occasion, while he was sitting in the Cathedral of Pisa, Galileo noticed a lamp hanging from the roof by a chain, swinging slowly to and fro. He observed that no matter how much or how little it swung, its swingings were perfectly regular.



As the result of this observation came the invention of the pendulum for clocks.

Today we all know that the earth revolves around the sun. But in Galileo's time the Roman Catholic Church taught that the earth was fixed, and no one was allowed to disagree with the teaching of the church.

The telescope had just recently been invented. While Galileo was not the inventor of the telescope, he was the first person to produce a telescope powerful enough to study the sun, moon, planets and stars. In the course of his observations, he discovered what a man named Copernicus had taught before, that the earth moved around the sun. However the Church had declared that Copernicus' teaching was false and erroneous, and a heresy.

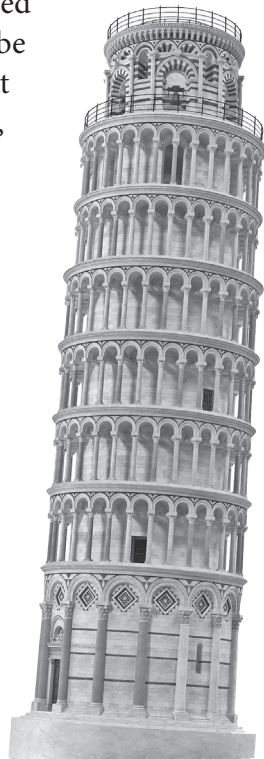
Galileo decided that the best way to make his scientific knowledge known was to write books. He spent the next two years working on his book *Dialogues Concerning the Two World Systems*, which he published. This book showed

clearly that what Copernicus taught was scientifically true. His opinions soon became known and were condemned. The Jesuit priests said that his views could have a worse effect upon the Church than Luther and Calvin put together.

In 1633 when Galileo was 69 years old and was sick, he was ordered to appear before the Inquisition at Rome. The Inquisition was a Court to examine people accused of heresy. It had power to order them to be tortured and even to burn them at the stake. Galileo was brought before this Court to stand trial for heresy for teaching that the earth revolves around the sun. Kneeling before the officers of the Inquisition he was forced to recant and deny what he knew to be true, or else be tortured. It is said that as he arose from his knees he declared, "Still it moves."

Galileo spent the rest of his life under house arrest. Before his death in 1642, he became blind. He was buried in his own church of Santa Croce at Florence. Some time later a monument was allowed to be erected over his tomb.

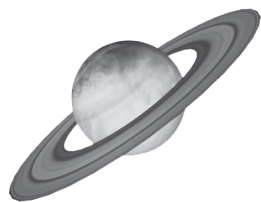
The same year that Galileo died, a baby was born at Woolsthorpe, England. The baby was so small that his mother said he could be fitted into a quart pot! He grew up to become the great physicist and astronomer, Sir Isaac Newton. Newton was able to prove that what Galileo had taught was true.



20. A convinced scientist

THE BRITISH SCIENTIST, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1717), had a scientist friend who did not believe in God and thought that the world had evolved. On many occasions Newton talked to his friend about God and how He created all things, but the man was not convinced.

Newton thought of a plan that might convince his friend. He asked an inventor to make him a working model of our solar system, with the sun, moon and planets moving around.



Newton set up this model on his study table and sat down to read. Soon his friend came in and saw the model working. “Who made this model?” he asked. “No one,” replied Newton. Thinking that Newton had not heard him, he asked again, “I said, Who made this model?” “No one,” replied Newton, “I came into my study and there it was on my table.”

“Do you think I am a fool?” replied his friend in a voice that showed that he was a little annoyed. “Someone had to make it.”

Newton walked over to his friend and, placing his hand on his shoulder, said, “My dear friend, you will not believe me when I say that no one made this little model; yet you believe that this wonderful world and vast universe came into being without a maker!”

Newton’s friend had to admit the truth which Newton had demonstrated. God blessed this illustration to Newton’s friend. He became a true Christian, sure that the Lord had made all things by His great power.

21. The real fool

IN OLDEN TIMES some lords and rich men kept a clown or a jester in their houses, to entertain and amuse their families and friends.



One lord had a clown who was very foolish and simple. One day the lord gave the jester a rod or staff and told him to keep it until he found someone more foolish than himself. If he met such a man, he could give the rod to him, meaning that no one was really as stupid as this man.

A few years later this lord became very ill and was dying. The jester came to see him and was told that his master was leaving this world.

"Where are you going?" asked the jester. "On a very long journey," replied the lord. "And when will you come back - in a month?" inquired the jester. "No," answered his master. "Within a year?" he asked. "No," replied the master. "What then - never return?" asked the jester. "Never," solemnly replied the lord.

"And what preparations have you made for where you are going?" he asked. "None at all," said the master.

"Are you going away for ever, and have made no provisions before you leave?" said the puzzled jester, "Here, take my rod, for I am not such a fool as that."

Many people are like this foolish lord. They are passing through this life and are going to meet God and an eternity that will never end. Yet they give no thought about their soul's salvation, whether their sins are forgiven or where they will spend eternity.

22. The all important test

THE FATHER OF a young girl did not believe in God or the Bible. In fact, he laughed at the Bible and tried to teach his daughter not to believe it was true. The young girl's mother was a true Christian who loved the Lord and believed His Word. She used to read the Bible to her daughter and tell her about the Lord Jesus and His salvation.

So this girl was taught two very different things, and she was not sure which one to believe.

After a while the young girl became very ill, and the doctors told the parents that she would die. The father was terribly upset as he realised that soon his daughter would be taken from him.

As he sat by the bedside, she asked him, "Father, you tell me there is no God and the Bible is not true, and mother tells me there is a God and that the Bible is true; which one should I believe?" The father was deeply challenged by this searching question and thought for a while. Then he replied, "You had better believe what your mother teaches you." He realised that his unbelief and denying of God had nothing to offer to his dying daughter, whereas the Bible offers us forgiveness and eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Any belief that denies the hope of eternal life with the Lord Jesus when we die, is not worth having.

* * *

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." (2 Peter 1:16)

23. Half a Bible

MANY YEARS AGO a man who was selling Bibles came to a country cottage in France. He greeted the lady and offered a New Testament for sale.

The lady, named Jeanne, looked at the New Testament longingly. But what would the priest say? “Do not be afraid, madam,” said the Bible seller, “The priest would be sinning against God if he stopped you reading about the love of Christ.” At last she bought the New Testament saying that she hoped she would be forgiven if she had sinned.

Soon her husband, Jacques, a forest worker, arrived home. After tea, Jeanne timidly brought out the book she had bought. Jacques was very angry that she had spent his money in this way. “But it’s not all your money, Jacques,” pleaded the wife, “It’s mine as well as yours.”

“Give me that book,” shouted Jacques in great anger. He snatched it from her hands. “If the money is half yours and half mine, then the book will be the same.” He opened the book roughly and tore it into two pieces. He put one half in his pocket and threw the other half to his wife.

Several days later Jacques was working in the forest. He had just finished his mid-day meal and had nothing to read. Suddenly he remembered the torn book. He decided to have a look at it. His rough fingers had torn the New Testament in two at the 15th chapter of Luke’s Gospel. The words he began to read were, “. . . and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” He was amazed at these words and read to the end of the story.

Then many questions came to him about this lost son.

What had he done? Why had he gone away? Where had he been? What moved him to return home?

“I wish I knew the beginning of this story,” he thought, but he was too proud to ask Jeanne for her part of the book. Jeanne too had many questions. She had read her part of the New Testament and had come to love it. But her part ended with the words, “I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, . . .” There the story stopped. She wondered, “Did he really return home? Did his father receive him?” She longed to know the answers, but she was too frightened to ask Jacques.

The days passed. One day, however, it poured with rain and Jacques came home early, feeling very weary. He ate his tea quietly. Then he said, “Jeanne, you remember that book I tore in two?” “Oh, yes,” she replied with apprehension.

“My part had a wonderful story in it, but only the end of it. I cannot rest until I know the beginning of it. Bring me your part.” Jeanne replied, “How amazing! The same story is ever in my mind, only I lack the ending. Did the father receive that wayward son?” “He did. But what was the sin that separated them?” asked Jacques.

She brought her part of the New Testament, and for the first time they read together the lovely parable of the prodigal son. The Holy Spirit had been working in both their hearts and caused them to see that it is a picture of how we have gone away from God, and how He welcomes those who sincerely and humbly return to Him. Both Jacques and Jeanne became true Christians and read and loved the Bible for the rest of their lives.

Luke 15 has the full story of the prodigal son: How he left home, was in great trouble, determined to return home, and how wonderfully his father received him again. Be sure to read this lovely parable for yourself.

24. God's young prophet

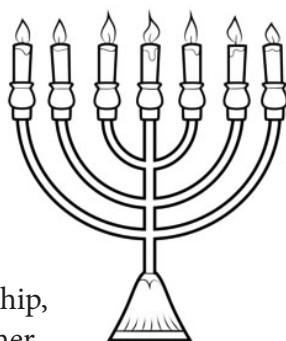
IN THE BIBLE we read a very lovely story about a young boy, who later became a prophet of God and how God spoke to him while he was very young. This boy was Samuel.

Although Samuel's father worshipped the Lord, he had done something that was very wrong: he had two wives. The name of one was Peninnah and of the other Hannah. There was much sadness and trouble in this family. Peninnah had sons and daughters, but Hannah did not have any children at all. Peninnah mocked and laughed at Hannah because she had no children. This made Hannah very unhappy and cry bitterly. Sometimes she even refused to eat any food.

In those days the people of Israel used to worship God at a place called Shiloh. In the worship, the priests offered sacrifices to God, they read the law of God and explained it to the people, and God's praises were sung.

When Hannah went up to worship, she was deeply troubled in her heart. She prayed to God and asked Him to give her a son. She promised that if the Lord gave her a son, then she would give him back to God so that he would serve God. Hannah secretly prayed this prayer in her heart; her eyes were shut, her lips moved, but there was no sound.

When the High Priest Eli saw her, he thought that she was drunk, and he told her to put away her wine. Hannah



meekly told Eli that she had poured out her heart to God in prayer. Eli replied, "The Lord give thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." Hannah returned home happy, and soon God gave her a son. Hannah called his name "Samuel," which means "asked of God."

For the next three years Hannah did not go up to the worship of God, because Samuel was too young. When at last she did go up, she took Samuel to Eli, and told him that this was the son she had prayed for and that she wanted him to serve the Lord. She left Samuel with Eli to be taught and to learn how to serve God. After this Hannah returned home, and God gave her more children; she had three sons and two daughters.

Every year Hannah went up to Shiloh to see Samuel and took him a new coat or a robe, which people wore in those days.

Eli, the High Priest, had two sons who were also priests. But they were very wicked and did not love God. In those days when someone brought a lamb to sacrifice it to God, while the animal was roasting as a burnt offering, the priest could come and take a little of the meat for himself. But these two priests took a lot of the meat before it was roasted. If anyone complained how greedy they were, they would say, "Give it to us, or we will take it by force." The way these priests lived was also very wicked and corrupt.

A man of God came to Eli and told him that because of these sins, all his family would die young, and that both his sons would soon be slain in battle. Eli, however, did nothing to stop his sons from doing evil. Samuel did not join in any of their evil deeds, because He loved God and sought to serve Him.

When Eli was very old, he became almost blind and could hardly see. One night Eli went to bed early, Samuel attended

to the lamps in the temple, and then went and lay down himself.

Suddenly someone called, "Samuel!" Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "I am here, you called me." Eli replied, "I called not, go and lie down again." Samuel went and lay down. Again the same voice called, "Samuel!" Samuel did not know that it was the Lord who was calling him. He went to Eli and said, "I am here, you did call me." Again Eli sent Samuel back to bed.

Then the Lord called Samuel the third time, and he went to Eli and said in a puzzled voice, "Here I am, for you did call me." Eli then realised that it was God who was speaking to Samuel. He told him to go and lie down again, and if the voice came again, to say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."

The Lord did call Samuel the fourth time, "Samuel, Samuel!" He answered, "Speak, for your servant hears." God talked very solemnly to Samuel and told him how wicked Eli's two sons were, and how Eli had not stopped them. God was now going to judge the whole family of Eli.

Samuel lay in bed till the morning, then arose and opened the doors of the temple. He was afraid to tell Eli what God had said. But Eli called Samuel and asked him solemnly, "What did God say?" Samuel told Eli everything. Eli answered, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him."

Samuel later became a true prophet of God. Everyone in all the land of Israel knew that God spoke to Samuel and that he was chosen to be a prophet of God.

All that God said about Eli and his family came to pass. The Philistines invaded the land of Israel and one day the two sons of Eli were slain and the sacred ark of God was taken by the Philistines. When news reached old Eli (he was ninety-eight years old) he was so shocked that he fell off the seat upon which he was sitting, and broke his neck and died.

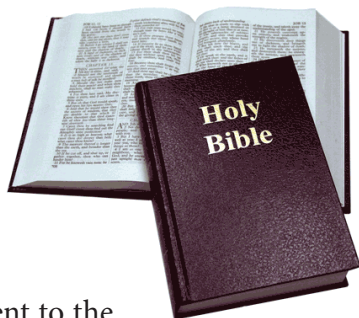
Samuel had loved the Lord and walked in His ways ever since he was a young boy, and he grew up to be a very faithful prophet of God. Read this story for yourself in the book of 1 Samuel.

25. How God blesses His Word

MANY YEARS AGO in Ireland there was a lady who was a very devout Roman Catholic. She always went to church and prayed, but she did not have peace in her heart. She became very troubled about her sins. She went to the priest and confessed them all, but her trouble of heart only grew worse.

At last she went to the priest and told him of her great distress. He told her that she needed something to make her happy, and as there was a comedian in town, she should go and hear him.

The lady decided to go and hear this comedian, but she went to the wrong place. She found a group of people in a hall, but instead of a comedian, a preacher stood up and began to preach. His subject was “The Forgiveness of Sin.” The lady wanted to leave the meeting at first, but she was shy and did not want to make a noise in leaving. So she decided to stay until it was finished.



The sermon was the very message she had wanted to hear. Afterwards she asked the preacher what book he had been reading from. He told her that it was a Bible and gave her a copy. She went home and read and read the Bible and she trusted in Christ. The burden of her sin was taken away and she was wonderfully saved.

Some weeks later the priest visited her and asked her why she had not been attending church. She told him that she had found forgiveness and peace with God. When the priest saw the Bible, he was very angry and grabbed the Bible. He shouted at her, saying that she would go to Hell if she read that book. He took the Bible and left in anger.

The lady bought another Bible and continued to read it diligently. A month later, she decided that she should go and talk to the priest. When she arrived at his place, a nun opened the door and said in an angry voice, "Come in and see the priest." When the lady went in, she saw a coffin with the dead body of the priest in it. The nun said, "He died very upset, and he cursed you for having that book, the Bible."

Though the lady left the house very sad and upset, she continued to read her Bible. Some weeks later, late at night, there was a knock at the lady's door. When she opened the door, a lady stood there with her head covered. She asked her inside. When the lady took off her veil, it was the nun. She said, "I have come to tell you that I am very sorry for telling you a dreadful lie about the priest." She told her how the priest had begun to read the Bible, and when he died he was praising God for His mercy and forgiveness.

The nun told the lady how she had begun to read the Bible after the priest was buried, and she also had found the Lord and His mercy. Now she was running away from the Convent and fleeing to England. She had found Christ and salvation through reading the Bible, just as the priest and the lady had done.

26. Weak instruments

THE LORD OFTEN uses very weak people and things to accomplish a great work. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 the Lord says, “My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

We have all heard of David killing the giant Goliath, and Gideon with his small band of men, defeating the great multitude of the Midianites. But do we realise that God still does wonderful things through very weak people?

Augustine of Hippo, who had lived a very ungodly life for many years, later became very troubled and distressed about his soul’s salvation. He was sitting one day outside a city, wondering what he should do, when in the distance he heard some children singing, “Take up and read, take up and read.” Beside him was a Bible, so he took it up and read from Romans 13:14, “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” These words really spoke to his heart and he did put on Christ by the Lord’s grace, and later became a famous preacher and teacher.

Augustus Toplady was a brilliant student. At the age of sixteen he visited Ireland. As he walked along, he went into a barn where a poor, uneducated man was trying to preach the gospel. God was pleased to bless the preacher’s feeble words to Toplady’s heart and he was truly saved. Toplady became a godly preacher and wrote a number of very famous hymns.

John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress*, was deeply distressed over his sinful condition and despaired of ever finding mercy from the Lord. One day as he walked along a street, he saw some women sitting in the doorway of a house, talking about the Lord and His mercy and salvation. Bunyan stopped to listen to these women, and he was greatly helped

by their words and soon found peace with God through believing on the Lord Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon, when he was young, set out one Sunday to attend a church, but a snow storm came, so he went into a little chapel that was nearby. In the pulpit was a poor unlearned man trying to preach. He could do little more than quote his text a number of times, Isaiah 45:22: “Look unto me, and be ye saved.” God blessed this feeble sermon to Spurgeon’s heart and he did look unto the Lord Jesus and was saved. Spurgeon later became a famous Baptist preacher.

Let us never despise our weak and feeble efforts for the Lord but let us trust and pray that He will use them in a wonderful way.

27. The Lamb of God

SOME PREACHERS LIKE to visit a place where they are to speak, to test how their voice sounds in the building, before they actually preach.

On one occasion Charles Haddon Spurgeon was asked to preach in a very large hall in London. As he had never been in the building before, he decided to pay it a visit and test its speaking qualities.

When he went into the large building, no one was there except himself. So he walked up to the preaching platform and said in a very loud voice, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

He listened for a moment to hear whether there were any

echoes. Then he turned in another direction and said the same words in the same loud voice. Once more, he turned in the opposite direction and quoted the same text. Being satisfied, Mr Spurgeon left the building and returned home.

Unknown to Mr Spurgeon, in another part of the building a workman was kneeling down, working on a floor. Suddenly he heard a voice ring through the building, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” He quickly knelt upright and listened with amazement. Where did it come from? Who said those words?



Then the voice came two more times with the same words, each time he listened more intently.

These words became fastened in the workman’s mind and he could not forget them. He thought and pondered over these words and what they meant.

By the Lord’s grace, this man did “behold the Lamb of God,” the Lord Jesus Christ. He looked to the Lord in faith and was saved.

How glad and surprised Mr Spurgeon was to receive a visit from this workman and to hear how the Lord had blessed that text of Scripture to this man’s heart and had saved him.



28. A child's prayer

ALITTLE OVER A hundred years ago a man and his wife, who lived in London, decided one Sunday evening to go for a walk. As they walked along the street they came to the large church called the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where the famous preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was preaching. These people had no thought of God. They never went to church; in fact, they lived very ungodly lives and broke God's law continually.

The man's wife said to him, "Let us go in to this church." The man replied, "I have no objection to hear the nonsense talked." He meant that he would hear some foolish things spoken if he went into the church, but he didn't mind going.

They went into the church and heard Mr Spurgeon preach. He spoke very clearly and powerfully on the gospel of Christ and of the need to repent and believe on Christ and to call upon Him for salvation.



When the man and his wife went home, he said to her, "Sukey, did you hear what the preacher said?" She answered, "Yes, I did. He told us that we would go to Hell if we did not pray." "Do you ever pray?" asked the husband. "No," replied the wife. "Nor do I," said the man, "and I do not know how to pray." "Oh," said the wife, "our little daughter Mary goes to Sunday school; she will know how to pray." Mary was upstairs asleep in bed. The parents went up and woke her and said pleadingly, "Mary, you must pray

for your father and mother.” Little Mary got out of bed and prayed for them both, and God heard her prayer. Both the man and his wife were saved and wonderfully changed. They became godly people who worshipped the Lord and lived for Him.

God sometimes uses little children to lead others to Himself.

29. Service and honour

CH Spurgeon

YOU CANNOT HAVE Christ if you will not serve Him. If you take Christ, you must take Him in all His characters, not only as Friend, but also as Master; and if you are to become His disciple, you must also become His servant. I hope that no one kicks against that truth. Surely it is one of our highest delights on earth to serve our Lord, and this is to be our blessed employment even in heaven itself: “His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face.”

This thought also enters into our idea of salvation; to be saved, means that we are rescued from the slavery of sin, and brought into the delightful liberty of the servants of God. O Master, Thou art such a glorious Lord that serving Thee is perfect freedom, and sweetest rest! Thou hast told us that it should be so, and we have found it so. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” We do find it so; and it is

not as though rest were a separate thing from service, the very service itself becomes rest to our souls. I know not how some of us would have any rest on earth if we could not employ our daily lives in the service of Christ; and the rest of heaven is never to be pictured as idleness, but as constantly being permitted the high privilege of serving the Lord.

* * *

“Serve the Lord with gladness.” (Psalm 100:2)

30. A noble martyr

POLYCARP WAS THE Bishop of Smyrna who served Christ faithfully for many years. He lived from about 70-156 AD. He was a personal friend of John the apostle.

In 156 AD a noisy crowd gathered in Smyrna to attend their heathen sports and festivals. Christians dreaded these times because a number of Christians had been thrown to the wild beasts on past occasions.

At this time anyone who was a Christian and did not worship the heathen gods could be put to death. At this festival eleven Christians were put to death for their faith, but the crowd called for more. At last someone suggested that they find Polycarp the old bishop.

The friends of Polycarp urged him to flee. At first he refused but later agreed to leave the city. He fled to a farm belonging to some friends, but the searchers soon arrived. Then he fled to a second farm, but two slaves under torture told where he was.

The soldiers found Polycarp in bed in a cottage. Polycarp arose and quietly ordered the people to give the soldiers some food. He then asked for permission to pray. Although he was eighty-six years old he stood praying for two hours. Then he said to the soldiers, "I am ready to go now." He was placed upon an ass and led back into the city.

The Roman Governor asked Polycarp to say that Caesar is Lord, to curse the Lord Jesus and to burn incense to the gods. Polycarp firmly refused to do so. When the Governor asked why he would not do it, Polycarp replied, "Eighty-six years I have served Him (Christ) and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

Polycarp's captors tried in vain to persuade him to deny Christ, but he would not. At last a herald was sent to the arena to announce three times, "Polycarp has confessed himself to be a Christian." Some of the crowd called for him to be thrown to the lions, and others shouted that he should be burned alive.

At last a fire was prepared to burn Polycarp. The executioner intended to nail Polycarp to the stake, but he asked to be left



alone and he would not move. The godly and gentle bishop lifted up his voice in prayer to thank God that he was found worthy to die. At last the fire was lit. When Polycarp did not soon collapse, the executioner stabbed him with a dagger. So ended the earthly life of a faithful man of God, but his soul was with the Saviour he had served.

The Lord Jesus said, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

31. Telling others about Christ

IN 1733 THE Moravians, who were mostly German Christians, decided to send missionaries to Greenland. Before they went, they discussed how they should preach to these people who had never heard the gospel. They decided that they could not preach Christ to them because the people did not know anything about the Bible. So they planned to teach the people that there was a God, what God was like, what was right and wrong, that God will judge the world and punish the ungodly, and many other truths. But they did not plan to tell them about the Lord Jesus and His death until the people understood these other truths.

The missionaries laboured and taught the people for years, but they never saw one person converted or changed in their hearts. The reason was that the Lord Jesus had been neglected and hidden from the people.

One day a missionary was reading to a poor Greenlander.

The book told about the Lord dying on the cross and how God sent Him to die for sinners, and that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The Greenlander asked the missionary to read it again to him. Then he said, "What wonderful words! Did the Son of God die for us poor Greenlanders that we may live?" The missionary replied that it was so; that whoever believes on Christ shall be saved. The native man clapped his hands and cried aloud, "Why did you not tell us that before!" The man believed and was saved, as were others when they heard of Christ.

Some people only talk about God's law, and right and wrong, as the missionaries did. But we must also speak of Christ and what He has done for us. People must hear and believe the simple gospel in order to be saved.

* * *

"But we preach Christ crucified, . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God. . . . For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24; 2:2)



32. Moses, a great leader of God's people

WHEN THE BOOK of Exodus opens, the children of Israel have multiplied and are a great race of people. But they live in a land that is not their own, Egypt.

Joseph, the one who saved Egypt, is now forgotten. Fear grips the heart of the new king Pharaoh. He feared that the children of Israel would join with his enemies and fight against Egypt, so he wickedly forced them to become his slaves and treated them very cruelly.

However, God continued to bless the Israelites with many children, as He had promised. This made Pharaoh even more hard-hearted. He gave orders that all the Hebrew baby boys were to be drowned at their birth.

During this very sad time, a baby boy was born to a couple of the House of Levi. He was a fine, healthy baby and the mother hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took a basket of bulrushes, made it watertight with pitch (tar) and laid the baby in it. Then she put the little boat among the reeds by the river bank. The baby's sister, Miriam, stood at a distance to watch over him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe at the river and



saw the basket among the reeds. She sent her maid to get the basket, and when she opened the basket, the baby cried. Although she knew that he must be a Hebrew baby, she had pity on him. Miriam, the baby's sister, bravely stepped forward and offered to bring a Hebrew woman to look after the baby. Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." So Miriam ran and brought her own mother. The happy mother now had her baby back and he grew up safely in her home.

When the child was grown, he was returned to Pharaoh's daughter and became her son. She called his name "Moses, . . . Because I have drawn him out of the water."

When he grew up, Moses became the greatest leader of God's people, the children of Israel, and wrote the first five books of the Bible.

33. Letter to a young convert

John Bonar 1740

Adapted and abridged

YOU HAVE BEGUN well; may you continue to go forward in your Christian path. You will no doubt meet with the temptations of Satan, of your own corrupt nature and of the world, but He that is with you is greater than all your enemies. Beware of grieving the Holy Spirit by backsliding. They that have no root may "endure for a while" but when tribulation or persecution arises, they are offended and fall away. It is the Lord alone who can establish your heart and make you strong to stand. I shall offer my advice, which by God's blessing may be helpful to you.

1. Study to know the wickedness of your own heart. This is one of the great differences between a Christian and a hypocrite, who does not desire to know his own sins. Cry to God that He may “search you and know your heart.” (Psalm 139:23)
2. Often look back over your past years, remember how many sins you have committed in the past, and pray that God would give you grace to hate these sins and to turn from them forever.
3. Pray daily to the Lord for mercy and pardon. You have heard of Christ and His perfect righteousness which is offered to you in the gospel. Seek to receive Him as your complete and only Saviour.
4. Think what your Christian profession may one day cost you. It is easy to believe in a time of peace and quietness. Seek to resolve through the Lord’s grace to follow Christ no matter what comes upon you.
5. Read and seek to know the Holy Scriptures daily. It is from the Bible that you will draw wisdom and knowledge.
6. Study to be sound in the faith. Read good books, especially the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. Avoid the company of those who spread unsound doctrines. “Hear the best ministers, read the best books, and keep the best company” is good advice.
7. Wait upon God regularly in prayer. He is a faithful friend and is always ready to help you in the time of need. Learn to lift up your heart with a short prayer to God in every situation.

8. You are beginning your profession in the world; be diligent and faithful in all your duties. Beware of idleness, which is the mother of all vices. Seek to glorify God in whatever you do.
9. Remember that the eye of the world is upon you, looking for some failing or wrong in your life. But above all remember that the eye of God is upon you at all times, and it is to Him you must one day give account for all your actions; therefore, endeavour to please Him in whatever you do.

34. Joshua, a man of courage

WHEN THE ISRAELITES left the land of Egypt, there was a young man with them who had much courage from the Lord. Joshua, the son of Nun, was chosen as one of the twelve spies who were sent into the land of Canaan. He and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, were the only spies who brought a favourable report of the land that God had promised to give to the people. These two men were the only ones who trusted in the promise of the Lord. Therefore, of the grown ups who left Egypt, only these two men were allowed to enter the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness.

As the children of Israel came close to the land of Canaan the second time, Moses was told by God to make Joshua the new leader of His people. Moses died before the people began to take their new land. Joshua was to lead God's people into war against the inhabitants of the land. But he wasn't

afraid because God had promised to be with him and to give them the victory.

One example of God giving victory over His enemies to Joshua was at the great walled city of Jericho. Joshua sent in spies to see how strong the city was. These spies were hidden by Rahab the harlot. They promised that she and her family would be saved alive when God gave them the city.

God told Joshua what to do to fight the battle at Jericho. He led the people as they marched around the wall silently, once every day for six days. Beginning early in the morning on the seventh day, the people marched around the city seven times. On the seventh time the priests blew their trumpets of rams horns, and Joshua told the people to shout, for the Lord had given them the city. When the people shouted, the great wall of the city fell down flat. Only Rahab and her family were left alive out of all the city of Jericho; everything else was destroyed.

Only God could give so great a victory to His people, and only a man with great courage from God could lead His army. God gave Joshua many great victories over the inhabitants of Canaan, which you can read about in the Book of Joshua in your Bible.



35. Hugh Latimer

HUGH LATIMER (1485-1555) was born in Leicestershire in England. His early life was spent on the family farm. Young Hugh showed that he had an ability to learn, so at the age of 14 he was sent to the University of Cambridge to study. Later he graduated and became a lecturer in the University.

Latimer lived in a time when people did not have the Bible and very little was known about God or Christ. Even the priests and ministers knew very little about the Bible and very few of them could repeat the Ten Commandments.

At first Latimer was very opposed to the teachings of Martin Luther, and was very angry at those people who had obtained copies of the Bible and had begun to read them. He gave some lectures warning the people about this “new religion.”

Hugh Latimer was a very honest and sincere man, but he did not understand the Bible. Sometimes he was troubled about his soul, whether he was saved and forgiven. He went to the priests, but they told him to perform more religious duties and he would be right with God.

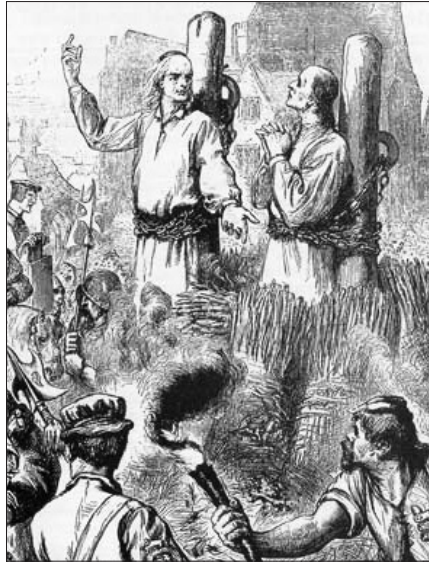
About this time Latimer heard that some of his own students had begun to read the Bible. Although it was a forbidden book at that time, Latimer decided that he should buy a copy and read it. He opened the Bible and read 1 Timothy 1:15: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” These were wonderful words to him; he had never heard such words before.

One day a man named Thomas Bilney came to Latimer and said, “For the love of God, hear my confession.” Latimer

agreed to hear Bilney's confession. But it was not a confession of sin, for Bilney told him how the Lord had saved him and forgiven all his sins. Latimer too believed and was saved.

Then Latimer began to preach the truth that he had found. Many people became offended with Latimer. Though he was accused of teaching false doctrines, God spared his life.

In 1536 Latimer was made Bishop of Worcester. During the reign of Henry VIII, he was twice thrown into prison because of his preaching. Then, during the short reign of Edward VI, he had freedom to preach God's Word. But in 1553 Queen Mary came to the throne. Latimer was put in prison in the Tower of London with some other friends. In prison they studied the Bible together.



Latimer and his friend Nicholas Ridley were condemned for teaching error. On 16 October 1555 they were burned at the stake at Oxford. When the fires were being lit, Latimer turned to Ridley and said, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day, by God's grace light such a candle in England as will never be put out." So both of them died.

Hugh Latimer was a true man of God. He loved God, and loved and taught His Word, and in the end was prepared to give his life for the Lord and His truth, which he preached.

36. Covetous Achan

GOD'S WORD SAYS, "Thou shalt not covet." "To covet" means to long greedily and enviously after possessions, usually those belonging to someone else.

In the book of Joshua chapter six, we read an exciting account of the fall of Jericho. This city was wicked and heathen, and was cursed by the Lord, who ordered its complete destruction; Rahab and her family alone were to be spared. Only the city's silver and gold were to be removed to the Lord's treasury; anything else taken would bring a curse upon the man responsible.

So Jericho was captured - a great victory! But one man named Achan had disobeyed, and the Lord was very angry. We cannot hide anything from the Lord; He even knows our very thoughts.

Soon Joshua sent his valiant soldiers to capture another city called Ai. Ai was much smaller than Jericho had been. But when the fierce men of that city came out with their swords and spears, Joshua's men turned and ran! Joshua was grieved and ashamed. "How could this happen?" Joshua wept before the Lord all that day. But the Lord said, "Get up! Israel has sinned, and the guilty one must be put away."

So Joshua called the tribes of Israel together. After much searching, Achan was found in the tribe of Judah. Joshua said



sternly, “What have you done?” Achan, very afraid at being found out, said, “I have sinned against the Lord. When I saw gold and silver, and a beautiful garment in Jericho, I coveted them, and stole them! They are hidden in my tent.” Achan’s sin brought terrible punishment, not only on himself but on his family as well, for they were all taken away and stoned to death.

The Lord Jesus warned us against this sin of covetousness. He said in Luke 12:15, “Take heed; and beware of covetousness.” We are to “set our affections on things above.” Let us pray that the Lord will keep us from this grievous sin.

* * *

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Timothy 6:6)

37. The life of John Wycliffe

JOHAN WYCLIFFE WAS born at Spreswell in Yorkshire, England, in the year 1324. At that time the people in England had almost no knowledge of God or of His commandments. They had no Bible in their language; only a few parts had been translated. The priests also knew very little about God and the Bible, and they were very wicked in their lives.

But God had willed that the light of His Word, the Bible, should shine throughout England, and that a great work in the Church, called the Reformation, should begin. John

Wycliffe was to become the first Reformer in England and to translate the Bible for the people.

At an early age, Wycliffe's parents decided that he should be trained as a priest. When he was sixteen, he entered Oxford University. Four years later he gained the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and after three years more study he became a lecturer at the University.

One of Wycliffe's teachers at Oxford was Thomas Bradwardine. He taught Wycliffe the truths of God, and Wycliffe began to read the Bible. Without this teaching he might have become a priest without knowing anything of the Bible.

During the time Wycliffe was a student at Oxford, a dreadful plague swept across England. In London alone, 100,000 people died. It is thought that about 25 million people died in Europe from this disease, called the "Black Death."

In a wonderful way, Wycliffe was spared from this plague, and God used it to speak to Wycliffe's heart and to show him his need of salvation. Soon Wycliffe became known as a famous lecturer. His fame and knowledge brought him into favour with the king and the government, and he was chosen to answer the claims of the Pope of Rome for a great sum of money from England. Over a hundred years before, King John of England had promised to pay the Pope a large sum of money each year. This money had not been paid, and now the Pope was demanding it.

Wycliffe stated that the king is the head of his own land and the Pope has no power over other nations. It was then that Wycliffe began to see that the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were wrong.

At this time there were many friars, who were members of a religious order in the Roman Catholic Church. The friars

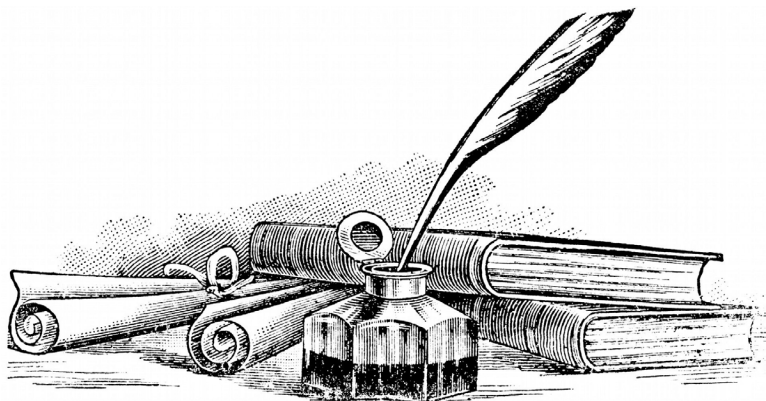
travelled over all the land selling pardons for sins. Murderers, thieves, and liars could all be pardoned if they paid enough money. Wycliffe realised how wrong these things were, but he became very ill and people thought he was dying. The friars came to persuade him to change his mind about his doctrines. Wycliffe arose and said with a loud voice, "I shall not die but live and declare the evil deeds of the friars."

The greatest work that Wycliffe did was to translate the Bible from Latin into English. He lived before printing presses were invented and each Bible had to be written by hand.

Wycliffe then began writing against the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. At last the Pope decided that he should be silenced. Wycliffe was ordered to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury to answer for his teaching and writing. Many people gathered to hear the trial, and two noblemen went with Wycliffe to meet the Archbishop. An argument began between the Archbishop and the friends of Wycliffe over whether he should stand or sit during the trial. Soon the whole crowd was standing, some shouting one thing and some another. The trial broke up in confusion, and Wycliffe and his friends quietly walked away; thus God delivered His servant.

A few months later, new charges were brought against Wycliffe. The Pope sent letters to the head of the Oxford University demanding that he be punished. When Wycliffe was again called before the Archbishop, the people defended Wycliffe once more. The Queen Mother also sent a man with a message to the Archbishop forbidding him to pass sentence on the Reformer.

Wycliffe planned a way to spread the Word of God throughout England and Scotland. He trained men to go and tell the wonderful story of God's grace and mercy. These men had to preach in the open air, because the church leaders did



not want the ordinary people to hear and read the Word of God. Wycliffe, who wanted everyone to hear what the Bible said, declared, "I will fill England with light." He meant the light of the Word of God.

One day, as Wycliffe was teaching his students at the University, the chancellor and some others walked into the room. They told him that he could no longer teach in the University and that he must leave at once. Wycliffe was sorry to leave the University. He moved to a place called Lutterworth, where he preached the Word of God to the people for some time. He also wrote more books explaining the Bible.

The Pope called Wycliffe to appear before him at Rome to answer for his doctrines, but Wycliffe was a sick man and refused to go. He said that the Pope did not have the power to call an Englishman before him. At that time there were two Popes, one in Rome and the other in France. They were opposed to each other, and because of this conflict the Pope was unable to silence Wycliffe.

Towards the end of 1382, Wycliffe was partly paralysed for a time, but he recovered and continued to preach. On the last Sunday in 1384, as he was serving the Lord's Supper, Wycliffe had a stroke and fell to the pavement. He was carried

to his house by his friends. On 31 December 1384 he died peacefully, and was later buried.

So great was the hatred that the Roman Catholic Church had for Wycliffe that in 1425, 41 years after he was buried, the Pope ordered that his bones be dug up and burned and then thrown into the river Swift.

38. Champion for the truth

THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE (274-337 AD) had only just overcome all his enemies and become the sole ruler of the Roman Empire, when new trouble arose which threatened the Church and the empire. It was the teaching of Arius, who claimed that Jesus was not really God, but had been created by God. He taught that Jesus did not always exist, and He was now like God but not really God.

The Lord raised up a young man to defend the truth about the Lord Jesus. This man's name was Athanasius (296-373 AD). He came from Alexandria in Egypt. At the age of twenty three, Athanasius wrote two essays showing that Jesus was fully and truly God. Athanasius became deacon and secretary to Alexander the Bishop of Alexandria.

When Arius and his followers continued to spread their false teachings, Bishop Alexander called together a council of one hundred bishops in 321 AD, and they condemned Arius' doctrines. But that did not stop the debate; in fact, it grew worse. In 325 AD, the Emperor Constantine called together three hundred bishops and hundreds of other church leaders to consider this matter. Finally, they drew up the Nicene

Creed that condemned the doctrines of Arius, and he was sent into exile.

When Athanasius was thirty years old, Alexander the bishop died and Athanasius was appointed head over the church in Egypt. Soon Arius returned from exile and wanted to partake of the Lord's Supper. Athanasius sternly refused. Athanasius was then reported to the Emperor and accused of some dreadful crimes. Happily he was able to prove these things were not true.

Arius and his followers kept plotting against Athanasius and accused him of planning the murder of Bishop Arsenius, but this also was shown to be false. More charges were brought against Athanasius, and this time he was banished to Gaul for a while. Eventually Arius died, as did the Emperor, and Athanasius was allowed to return to his church in Egypt.

Soon the followers of Arius brought new charges against Athanasius, and he was forced to flee to Rome. After a few more years of trouble, in 346 AD, Athanasius was allowed to return to Alexandria where he remained for nine years. During these years he wrote several books proving that Jesus was not just a man but was also fully God.

In 350 AD, the new emperor, Constans, was murdered. The next emperor, Constantius, was much opposed to Athanasius. He sent 500 soldiers to surround the church where Athanasius was preaching and arrest him. The soldiers burst into the church and killed several of the people, but Athanasius was able to escape, and fled into the desert. Even there he wrote more books against the teachings of Arius.

In 361 AD, Constantius died from a fever. The new emperor, Julian, also sought to arrest Athanasius in order to stop the troubles in his empire. But Athanasius was able to escape by sailing up the river Nile, where he stayed with

friends for a year. Two more emperors followed and each time Athanasius had to flee, returning home later.

At last he was able to return to Alexandria, where he lived peacefully for another seven years. When he died at the age of seventy seven, he had seen the rise and fall of seven Roman emperors. All his life, Athanasius had upheld the truth that Christ is equal with God the Father.

The Athanasian Creed, which was probably written later and named after him, sets out the great truths which Athanasius stood for and defended in the face of great opposition.

* * *

Extracts from the Athanasian Creed

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith;
3. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost;
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God;
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten;
22. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten;
23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding;
28. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

39. Four faithful youths

HAVE YOU EVER had to learn the Scripture, “Them that honour Me I will honour”? (1 Samuel 2:30) It’s a very easy Scripture to learn, but not nearly so easy to remember and practise when things are difficult. Here is a story of four boys who honoured God and He honoured them.

They were Israelites, born into good and probably wealthy homes. They were strong, handsome, and also clever, having studied well. Not only had they learned about the true God, Jehovah, and His commandments, but they loved Him and with their hearts wanted to obey Him.

This was quite different from most of the Israelites at that time. These people knew about God and His commandments, but they cared little about Him. They continually broke His laws, especially the one that said, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” (Exodus 20:3) They loved the gods of the heathen and worshipped them.

God sent many prophets to warn them that He would punish them for their idolatry. At last, when the boys were about fourteen years old, the time for this punishment arrived. God had prepared the heathen king of Babylon to do this, powerful King Nebuchadnezzar. He too was young, strong and very clever, but he was also proud and cruel, and worshipped idols.

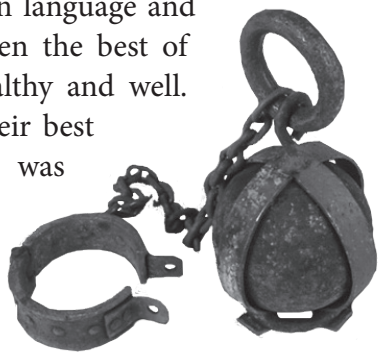
His army took many Israelites as captives to Babylon. What a sad day it was for them as they trudged, weary and weeping, along the long dusty road to Babylon. Here, most of them had to work hard, with no hope of returning home.

But life for these four lads would be very different from

that of most of the captives! You see, Nebuchadnezzar wanted some of his captives to be trained to fill important positions in his kingdom. For this he wanted only the very best - those who were young, strong, handsome, clever, and who studied well. Ashpenaz, his chief servant, was given the task of finding suitable young men and training them. He selected our four young friends, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

How different life was for them now. They were in a strange land, with a strange language; they were even given strange heathen names; and worst of all, they had no one to teach them God's Word. But God Himself was still with them, watching over and caring for them.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted all these lads to be very successful. Ashpenaz made them work hard, and they were taught the Chaldean language and customs. They were even given the best of food so they would look healthy and well. Daniel and his friends did their best to please Ashpenaz and he was especially fond of Daniel. However, the food served to them had first been offered in worship to the idols, and the four lads wanted to have nothing to do with idols.



Daniel was glad that he and Ashpenaz were good friends, so he could ask if they could be excused from eating the king's food. Ashpenaz would have gladly helped, but he feared they would not look so healthy as the others when the king came to inspect them. 'Then,' he said, "you would endanger my head before the king."

But Daniel had purposed in his heart to obey Jehovah, so

he went to Ashpenaz with a plan. "Try us for ten days with only vegetables and water," he said, "then see how we look." So it was agreed, and at the end of the test not one of the other students looked nearly so fit and healthy as those four.

Three years of hard work followed for the captive lads. How they must have looked forward to mealtimes with the delicious food and wine from the king's own table. Perhaps the others laughed at the four who sat down to the vegetables and water for each meal. Certainly no one wanted to join them!

The other students may have thought Daniel and his friends were very foolish, but God did not. He was watching over these four who were trying to please Him. God was pleased, too, and gave them special help with their studies.

So the three years of learning passed. Examination day arrived and what a scary exam it was! Nebuchadnezzar the King conducted the examination, asking the questions and listening carefully to the answers. At the end the four students were far ahead of all the others; in fact, they were better than all the wise men in the land - ten times better!

No wonder Nebuchadnezzar was delighted with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah! They were just the sort of young men he had been looking for to help him in the running of his vast kingdom. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar felt proud that his plan had worked so well. He appointed these four young men to very important positions in the land of Babylon.

It was the loving care and help of the watchful, faithful God Whom they had purposed in their hearts to please, the God Who hundreds of years before had given His Word, 'Them that honour Me I will honour,' who had blessed and helped these lads. Read this lovely story in Daniel chapter 1.

40. The fiery furnace

ONE OF THE many remarkable ways that God has shown His great power and mercy to His people was during the time when Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon and the Hebrew people were his captives.

King Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen who did not put his trust in the only true God. He worshipped an idol, which he believed had made him a great and mighty king.

One day he decided he would show his gratitude by getting his workmen to make a magnificent golden image of this god. Only the most skilful workmen were chosen to do the job. They worked long and hard in the hot sun. Finally the image was finished. Nebuchadnezzar was very pleased with their work. The idol was huge, and in the sunshine it shimmered and glistened. It could be seen for miles around.

The king decided that there should be a special dedication of the image and that it should be set up in an open place so that everyone could see it. Nebuchadnezzar quickly sent a message throughout all the kingdom to let the officials, governors and people know that they were to come as fast as they could to this very important event.

As they stood around looking in great amazement at the golden image, a loud trumpet call suddenly rang throughout the crowd. All the people stood very still and quietly, ready to hear the king's important message.

“To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp and lyre, you shall fall down and worship the golden image, and whoever does not fall down will be cast into the middle of a fiery burning furnace.”

As these words were spoken, many people began to tremble and drop to their knees in terror. Others were unsure and hesitated but finally the thought of the fiery furnace was too much, and they slowly sank to the ground. It seemed as though every person had fallen to the ground to worship the image.

However, away in the distance three figures could clearly be seen still standing. They were the only three who had not bowed down.

Other people in the crowd saw them and ran quickly to tell the king that three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, had refused to bow down at the feet of the image. The king's face went red with rage at the thought of anyone defying his command.

"Bring these men quickly to me," he ordered. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were hurriedly led to where the king sat. "Is it true," Nebuchadnezzar cried, "that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image I have set up? I will give you one last chance to bow down to the image; if you refuse you will be cast immediately into the fiery furnace. Is there a god who will deliver you from my hand?"

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego quietly and confidently answered the king, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and He will deliver us from your hand; but if He does not deliver us, may you understand that we do not serve your gods nor will we worship the golden image."

Nebuchadnezzar was so furious that he immediately commanded that the furnace be heated seven times more than its usual heat. Then he ordered several of his soldiers to throw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the furnace. Now the furnace was extremely hot. It was so hot that the flames killed those soldiers who cast the three men into it.

Nebuchadnezzar sat staring in great amazement at what he saw. The soldiers lay dead around the opening of the fiery furnace, but inside there appeared to be four men walking freely, unharmed by the fire.

“Look!” cried Nebuchadnezzar, “I see four men walking in the middle of the flames and the form of the fourth looks like the Son of God.”

Quickly Nebuchadnezzar called Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to come out of the fire. The king and all the people stood around the three men in great wonder. Not one hair on their heads was singed and there was not even the smell of fire on them or their clothing.

When the excitement of the crowd had died down, the king spoke in a very loud voice. “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and would not worship any other god. There is no other god who can deliver like this.”

God is a very powerful and merciful God. If we put our trust in Him, He is able to deliver us just as He delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.



41. Saved from atheism

AS A VERY small child, Vladimir was placed in a Ukrainian orphanage, and was soon adopted by a husband and wife who did not believe in God.

When Vladimir was five years old, his adoptive father was stricken with paralysis. To enable the wife to visit her husband in hospital, a lady was hired to care for Vladimir. Every night at bedtime, the lady did something that Vladimir had never seen before: she would kneel down and pray. “Why are you talking to yourself?” Vladimir asked. “I am not talking to myself, but to God,” she replied.

When Vladimir’s adoptive mother heard what the lady had done, she was angry and said the child’s mind would be corrupted by seeing someone pray. She ordered the lady never to pray again in front of the child.

However, the lady continued to pray every night while Vladimir watched. When he asked again why the lady prayed, she replied that God loved her and heard her prayers.

“Could you talk to God about my father?” asked Vladimir, “He is so very sick.” The lady then prayed that God would heal the man or at least keep him alive until Vladimir became a man.

The next day the father was sent home to die, because the doctors could do no more for him. For the next few nights, Vladimir prayed his own prayers in bed, begging God to spare his father.

One day his father raised himself from his deathbed and began to walk. The Communist doctors were amazed at this “impossible” recovery. Young Vladimir never told anyone about his prayers, but he never forgot.

Years later, after the deaths of his adoptive parents, Vladimir married and immigrated to America, where he had a spinal operation. During the three months' recovery time, he heard a gospel message in the Russian language on short-wave radio. His childhood memories all came back, and he sincerely repented of his sins and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.

One day Vladimir's wife met some elderly immigrants from his home town in the Ukraine. They had known Vladimir's real father and mother, of whom he knew nothing at all. They told her that they were both Christians, and Vladimir's father had been a pastor of a secret church. The secret police, the KGB, had arrested the parents and executed them for their faith and preaching.

God kept His promise to bless the children of those who trust in Him. We may be sure that He heard and answered the prayers of these parents for their infant son who they were forced to leave in this world.

42. God sees all things

PROVERBS 15:3 TELLS US, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." This means that God can see all things and nothing can ever be hidden from Him. No one can hide from the all-seeing eye of God.

Some years ago a missionary went to Africa to teach the people about the Lord. As he had to build houses and grow his own vegetables, he hired some local men to work for him.

He soon found that they only worked while he was watching them, and as soon as he went away, they all sat down under a shady tree and had a sleep.

On one occasion, the missionary was going away for a while and he wanted the men to do some work, so he planned how he could get them to work while he was not looking. The missionary had a glass eye. He took out the eye and placed it on the top of a post, and said to the natives, "I am going to leave my eye here to watch you all, to see if you work while I am away." The missionary then went away.

For a while the men worked well. They would look up and see the eye on the post and think it was watching them. Soon, however, one man thought of an idea to stop the eye watching them. He took a hat and crept around behind the post, and quickly put the hat over the eye. The workers were all pleased with what he had done and they all sat down under a tree and did not work. When the missionary returned home, he found all the men idle and a hat covering his glass eye.

Some people think that they can do things which God does not see. They act in the dark or in secret. But God's eyes can see as well in the night as in the brightest day. There never has been any deed done in all the history of the world that God did not see. He sees everything.

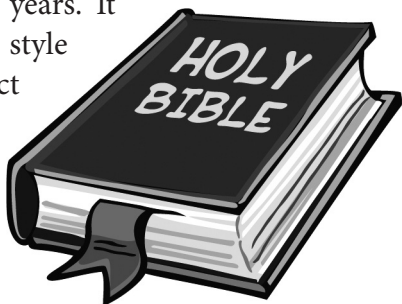
* * *

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." (Psalm 34:15)



43. The wonderful Book

THE BIBLE CONTAINS sixty-six books, written by about forty different authors, in at least three languages, in countries hundreds of miles apart, and over a period of about one thousand five hundred years. It contains a great variety of style and a great diversity of subject matter; and yet, with all the diversity of authorship, style and subject matter, there is a most wonderful unity throughout the whole book.



Just as the body is made up of a great many members - arms, feet, hands, etc - yet it is one complete body, full of life and energy; so this Holy Book of God, full of endless variety and diversity, is one complete book, made alive by one great Spirit. It is this amazing unity of the Book that convinces us that it must be the Word of God. As you study it you discover the same spiritual truths; indeed, the same spiritual thoughts that are expressed by Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and David, are also expressed by Peter, James, John and Paul. This is amazing, considering that hundreds of years separated these writers. There could be no discussion between these writers, living so many years apart, yet they all agree.

It is interesting to notice the similarity that exists between the first three chapters of Genesis and the last three chapters of Revelation. The Bible begins in a garden and ends in a garden. It begins with creation and it ends with the new creation. It begins with a paradise lost, and it ends with

paradise regained. It begins with the promise of a coming Redeemer (“It [the seed of the woman] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”), it ends with a perfected redemption. It begins with a tree not to be touched, it ends with the tree for the healing of the nations. It begins with the devil apparently victorious, and ends with the devil completely vanquished. It begins with sorrow and death and sin, and it ends with “no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” It begins with Adam and Eve driven out before God, and ends with men and women welcomed by God and dwelling with Him in the most glorious relationship forever.

44. The four lepers

ANCIENT CITIES WERE usually surrounded by high walls. When an enemy came to capture a city, the army would surround the city and prevent any food being supplied to the people inside.

This happened in the days of Elisha the prophet. He was in Samaria when Benhadad the king of Syria came with his army and surrounded the city. Soon all the food was eaten. The people were starving. They ate anything; even the heads of asses and bird droppings were sold for food.

Things grew worse, until two women agreed to eat their little children. One woman killed her child and they ate it, but the next woman refused to let her child be killed and eaten. The other woman complained to Jehoram the king of Israel.

The king in anger declared that Elisha would be executed that very day, because Elisha had refused to let the king slay the Syrians when God had smitten them with blindness just a short time before.

Then Elisha declared the Word of God. He said, "Tomorrow flour and barley will be sold very cheaply in the gate of the city." When the king's officer heard these words, he scoffed and said, "If God should make windows in heaven this might be." Elisha replied, "You will see it but not eat of the food."

Now, outside the city walls, there were four lepers. They too were starving. They said to each other, "Why do we sit here till we die? If we go into the city the famine is there. Let us go to the Syrians. If they kill us we shall but die; but if they give us food we shall live." Away they went in the evening twilight to the Syrians, and lo, they found the first tent empty, so they ate the food. They found the next tent the same, and the next. Then they decided to go and tell the watchman of the city. When the king heard that the Syrians were not in their tents, he said that they had withdrawn in order to capture the people when they came out of the city. He did not know that God had caused them to hear what they thought was an approaching army, and had fled.

At last the king sent two horsemen to investigate. They found that the Syrians had truly gone. So the people went out and collected the food, and as Elisha had said, flour and barley were sold very cheaply.

The king's officer was appointed to supervise the distribution of the food. However, the people rushed out of the city and trampled him to death, as Elisha had said: he would see it but not eat of the food.

In this story, recorded in 2 Kings chapters 6 and 7, we see the unbelief of the officer and how he was judged, and also

an example of God's care and wonderful works in providing for His people.

45. A strange auction

REV ROWLAND HILL, who lived from 1744 to 1833, was a preacher in London. He was very unusual and different in the things he often said and did.

On one occasion while he was preaching to a group of people in a park, along the road came a countess, a lady of high society, in a horse drawn carriage. Seeing the crowd standing in the park, she asked her driver what they were doing. He replied, "They are listening to that odd preacher, Rowland Hill."

"Drive near," said the countess, "so that I can hear him." When she came near, Mr Hill looked around and saw her listening from her carriage, and recognised who she was.

Then Mr Hill said, "Today we shall have an auction. We will auction the soul of countess . . . (mentioning her name)." And as if conducting an auction, he said, "Who will offer me a bid for her? Ah! here is a bidder, it is the world. World, what will you offer me for this lady's soul? 'Fame, wealth, ease, pleasure, enjoyment, happiness.'" Mr Hill continued, "But what do you offer in the time of sickness and death? 'No comfort, no peace, no assurance of life!' I refuse your offer world. This woman's soul is worth far more than you can give."

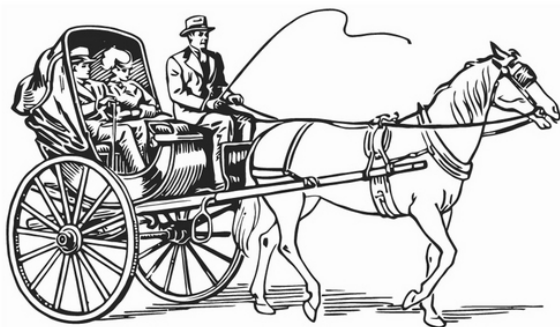
"Is there another bidder?" asked the preacher. "Here is another! It is the devil. What do you offer devil? The

pleasures of sin, pride, ignorance, a life without God' And what do you offer for the life to come?" demanded the preacher. "Separation from God, to be condemned, eternal punishment and lost forever! I refuse such an offer for this woman's soul."

The countess listened with amazement to the preacher. He continued, "Is there not another offer for this lady? Yes, here is Jesus Christ. What do you offer this lady in this life? 'Salvation, forgiveness of sin, peace with God, grace, love and hope.' But what about death and the life to come?" inquired the preacher. "There is comfort, peace and help in every trouble and in death itself. And after death, what?" he asked. "Eternal life and joy, and to be with the Lord forever. No more pain, sickness or death, but eternal glory in heaven."

"I accept this offer for this woman's soul," cried Mr Hill with a loud voice. Then turning to the countess, he said, "This is the best offer for your soul there could ever be. Madam, do you accept this bid for your soul?"

The countess did believe the message of the gospel and came to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Her life was transformed from one of worldliness and ignorance of spiritual things, to one of walking sincerely in the ways of God.



46. The rejected stone

IN PSALM 118:22 we read, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.”

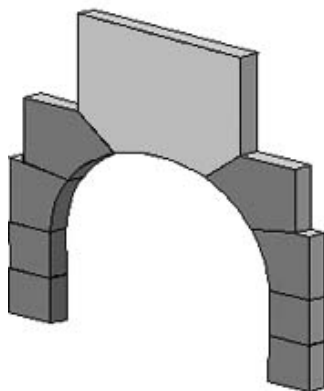
When the temple was being built by king Solomon, not one of the stones was cut in Jerusalem where the temple was built. They were all cut in the quarries and then transported to Jerusalem.

Each stone was cut to the exact size and shape so that it would fit into the building.

There is a story told that one stone was of a peculiar shape and the builders could not find a place for it. Many times they lifted that stone on the walls, and then lowered it again because it would not fit anywhere.

At last they cast that stone aside among the rubbish, and it became a joke among the builders. When anything seemed to be useless and worthless, they would say it was just like that stone that would not fit anywhere and had been thrown aside.

When the temple was almost finished, and the last stone, the “head stone” was sought, the workmen could not find it. They decided that the masons must have forgotten one stone. At last someone suggested that perhaps it was that odd-looking stone that they had cast among the rubbish. This stone was collected and it fitted exactly. And so, “The stone which the builders refused became the



head stone of the corner,” the most important stone in the whole temple.

In Acts 4:11 Peter says that this rejected stone was an excellent picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was despised and rejected, but God has made Him to be the “head stone” of God’s spiritual temple, the Church. The Lord is the stone upon which we build all our hopes and He is the head stone that knits and holds all God’s people together. Read the story of the building of the temple in 1 Kings chapters 5-6.

47. Lost and saved

SOME YEARS AGO a Scottish preacher named Mr Mackay was taking a series of services in a suburb of London.

At the end of one sermon, a young man came to him and said that he could not understand the gospel and therefore could not be a Christian. He asked Mr Mackay to talk to him for a while. Mr Mackay replied that he had to catch the next train, but if he would like to walk with him to the railway station, he would seek to explain God’s Word to him.

All the way to the station Mr Mackay sought to explain simply the way of salvation to the young man. “Is it clear to you now?” asked Mr Mackay. “I am afraid not,” replied the young man. “Then read Isaiah chapter 53 verse 6,” said Mr Mackay. “But I do not have a Bible,” the young man answered. “Here, take mine,” replied Mr Mackay in haste, “In Isaiah 53:6 you will find how we are lost and how we are saved.” Mr Mackay then quickly boarded the train and was gone.

The young man opened the Bible and read Isaiah 53:6: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." "Yes," thought the young man, "I have gone astray from God and gone my own way." The text continued, "And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He could see that these words spoke of Christ, how He bore our sins on the cross. The more he looked at this text the more wonderful it appeared. It spoke of our sin, but also of God's mercy in sending Christ to die for us.

When Mr Mackay returned to preach the next time, he looked for the young man. At last he entered the church with the Bible. "Did you read Isaiah 53:6?" asked Mr Mackay. "Yes, I did," he replied.

"And what did you find?" asked Mr Mackay. The young man explained how he saw that we had all gone away from God and were lost, and that God had sent Christ to suffer for our sins on the cross. When Mr Mackay asked him what was his response to that truth, the young man replied with great joy, "I now know that Jesus Christ is my Saviour."

48. The true God

ELIJAH, THE GREAT prophet of God, lived in the days of wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. This king and queen worshipped false gods, as did nearly all the people of Israel.

One day Elijah came to Ahab and told him that there would be no rain for three years, as a judgment from God upon their evil ways and their worshipping of idols.

Elijah then hid himself so that Ahab could not arrest him. He stayed by a little stream of water, but he had no food. God wonderfully provided for him by sending the ravens, or crows, with bread and meat each morning and evening.

Because of the drought, after a while the stream dried up. God told him to go to a land near Israel, called Zidori, and there a widow woman would care for him. Again God wonderfully provided for Elijah. The woman had only a little flour and oil in her jars. But God multiplied the oil and flour so that it fed Elijah, the widow and her son for almost three years.

At last God told Elijah to go to Ahab. Ahab was searching for Elijah and wanted to punish him, because he blamed Elijah for the drought. When Ahab met Elijah, he said angrily, "Are you the one who troubles Israel?" Elijah replied, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house; because you have forsaken God's commandments and worshipped Baal." Elijah told Ahab to call all the people to the top of Mount Carmel, and he would prove who was the true God.

Ahab did as Elijah had said. A very great company of people went up to the top of the mountain, as well as four hundred and fifty prophets of the false god, Baal. Elijah asked all the people how long they would be undecided and unsure in their minds. "If the Lord is God," he said, "then follow Him; but if Baal be god, then follow him." No one answered Elijah a word.

Then Elijah said, "Let us take two bullocks, build two altars, slay the bullocks and cut them into pieces and lay them on top of the altars, and then prophets of Baal can pray to their god, and I will pray to the Lord. The God Who answers by fire (sends fire to burn up the bullock) let Him be God." All the people answered, "It is well spoken."

Elijah told the prophets of Baal to offer their bullock first.

They built an altar, slew the bullock, and began to pray. They prayed from morning until mid-day, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no answer. They even leaped on the altar in their prayers to Baal.

Elijah then began to mock them, saying that Baal must be asleep or on a journey, and so they needed to cry louder. The Prophets of Baal prayed and prayed; they even began to cut themselves with knives and the blood ran down their bodies. But nothing happened in answer to their prayers. They were praying to a lifeless idol.

When evening came, Elijah called all the people together. He repaired an old altar of sacrifice to God. He slew the bullock and cut it into pieces. Then he dug a trench around that altar, and told the people to go and fill four barrels of water and pour it over the sacrifice. He told them to do this three times, and the water flooded over and around the sacrifice. No one could say that Elijah had secretly placed a fire under the sacrifice.

Then Elijah prayed to God and asked Him to let all the people know that He was the true God and that he (Elijah) had only acted in obedience to God. Suddenly the fire of the



Lord fell! It burnt everything - the sacrifice, the wood, and the water!

When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord He is the God, the Lord He is the God."

Elijah told the people to arrest all the prophets of the false god, Baal. But the people not only arrested them, they slew them all. They were so angry at these false prophets.

Still there had been no rain for over three years, and all the land was like a desert. Elijah prayed and asked God to send rain. He prayed seven times. At last his servant said, "There arises a little cloud out of the sea, about the size of a man's hand." Elijah told King Ahab to quickly get into his chariot and go home. Soon the wind blew and great black clouds gathered, and the rain poured down on the dry land.

Elijah proved Who was the true God to all the people. The false god Baal, could not hear or answer prayer. But the true and living God heard Elijah, and sent fire from Heaven and rain upon the land. Be sure to read the story of Elijah in 1 Kings chapters 17-19.



49. A great sermon

ON A HOT Sunday afternoon on July 8, 1741, the people of the town of Enfield, Connecticut, USA, crowded into their church to hear a famous minister, Jonathan Edwards, who was visiting that town.

The people of Enfield had not experienced the blessing of God that those in Edwards' home town, Northampton, had experienced recently. When Mr Edwards entered the church the people were talking and laughing loudly. There was a very lighthearted atmosphere; some even laughed at Mr Edwards as he walked to the pulpit.

Mr Edwards' custom was to read his sermon. When he began to read, a quietness and solemnity came over the whole congregation. The preacher announced his subject, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." His text was Deuteronomy 32:35, "Their feet shall slide in due time."

"You hang by a slender thread," said the preacher, "with the flames of Divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe and burn it asunder." Mr Edwards explained how unsure our lives are, how God's wrath and judgment await those who are unsaved, and how sinners may fall at any moment into the hands of a God who is angry with sinners.

At first the people sat quietly, their eyes and often their mouths wide open. Then they began to tremble and shake; they held tightly to their pews, being deeply distressed over their sins and the danger they were in.

The sermon lasted for two hours. Before it ended, people were weeping in all parts of the church. Some cried aloud, "Oh, I am going to Hell!". Others cried "What shall I do to be

saved?” On occasions Mr Edwards had to stop and ask the people to be quiet so that he could finish his sermon.

That day, many people in the congregation cried to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness, and were saved and filled with joy and comfort in their souls. This sermon was Mr Edwards’ most famous. Let us pray that God will bless His Word as He did Mr Edwards’ sermon at Enfield.

50. A Bible thief

OFF THE AFRICAN coast in the Indian Ocean are the Islands of Comoros. The African Inland Mission has a number of missionaries working on these islands.

One day two of the missionary ladies were swimming in the sea. They had left their car on the beach with the windows open. A young man crept up to the car, looking to see whether anyone was watching him. On the back seat was a basket with something in it. He quickly grabbed the basket and ran away.

“I thought I left my Bible in the car,” said one of the missionaries when they returned. When they realised that someone had stolen their basket with the Bible in it, they prayed that the thief would read the Bible and that God would speak to him.

Months later there was a knock on their door. It was a young man from the island. In his hand he was holding the stolen Bible. “I am very sorry,” he said. “I needed money and thought there was some in your basket. I have been reading your book - it’s wonderful! Please, may I keep it?”

The missionaries were delighted to let him keep the Bible. The young man asked many questions and after a while came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He is now one of the few Christians on the islands.

This thief found out what the Bible says is true, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

51. The shortest prayer

THE SHORTEST PRAYER in the Bible was prayed by Simon Peter.

When the Lord walked on the water, Peter asked the Lord to bid him come to him. The Lord did call Peter, and he climbed down out of the boat and began to walk on the water. But when he saw the angry waves, he began to fear, and cried, "Lord, save me!" The Lord Jesus answered this prayer; He took Peter by the hand and rescued him. Peter's prayer was very short, just three words, but a very good prayer.

Years ago a preacher used to visit a number of countries in Europe, taking various meetings. On each occasion, as he went through a certain town, he had a meal at the same cafe. In this cafe a young girl worked as a waitress. On one occasion the preacher asked her did she pray. She replied that she was very poor and had to work hard to help provide for her family, and so had no time to pray.

The preacher asked her, if he paid her would she pray the shortest prayer in the Bible. The girl was very puzzled by this offer, but at last said she would. She agreed to pray Peter's

prayer, “Lord, save me,” night and morning until the preacher returned, and he would pay her an agreed sum of money.

The girl kept her word, and for a week or so prayed “Lord, save me” twice every day. This started her thinking, “What does it mean to be saved? Why should I ask God to save me? Who can save me?”



She began to read her Bible and learned that she was a sinner and only the Lord could save her. Then she really began to pray this prayer from her heart and the Lord, Who heard Peter’s prayer, heard her prayer also and saved her.

Many weeks later the preacher returned, but the girl was not working at the cafe. He inquired where she was and was told that she had become very religious and had left her position. She was now working for the local minister’s wife. The preacher found the house and knocked at the door. When the young girl opened it, he said that he had come to pay her for saying the prayer.

The girl was so glad to be able to tell the preacher how the Lord had wonderfully saved her and heard her prayer. She refused to accept any money. The preacher was overjoyed to hear her testimony of the Lord’s grace and mercy.

Peter’s short prayer is a good prayer for each one of us to learn and to pray sincerely from our hearts.