JANUARY 2023

FREE

THE EXPLORER

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EPHESUS

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2023

A CURE FOR WORRY

From the Editor

Dear Reader,

Hello again. I hope this message finds you well. Like last year, I thought I'd peep from behind the curtain to wish you all a happy and blessed new year. How are you feeling about 2023? Happy? Sad? Perhaps, you're shrugging your shoulders. "It's just another year!" Or, maybe you are nervous and feel frightened? If you are, you are not alone. Lots of folk at the turn of the year feel the same.

Allow me to help. Let me start by gently reminding you that we all worry about lots of things. This is natural because we live in a world filled with uncertainty. Sadly, there is nothing we can do about that. It is part and parcel of living in a sin-cursed, sin-sick world. The simple fact is to accept that life is uncertain. However, because God knows the future and loves His people, He tells us lots of times not to worry. Turn to Philippians 4: 6 – 8 and read those words *slowly*.

"*Be anxious for nothing…*" That is, don't worry about anything. The Apostle wrote the letter to the Philippian brethren in prison with chains around his hands (1: 12 & 13). Imagine! Paul had lots to worry about, and the Philippian church had lots to worry about, and yet Paul wrote, "don't worry!" We are guilty of finding happiness in our surroundings, but Paul learned to find happiness and contentment in God the giver of every good and perfect gift. No wonder someone has called this letter "the epistle of joy!"

"*… but in everything by prayer…*" Here is the remedy. Don't worry about anything. Pray about everything. Turn 'worry' into prayer. Do not 'bottle' it. This takes practice – *lots* of practice. It is a holy skill, learned over many years. Get into the habit of asking God every day for strength to overcome your worry. It is not easy but remember that God wants you to pray. Praying is a bit like going to the gym – it strengthens your spiritual muscles! Neither be afraid to talk to others whom you love and trust. Christians should be there for one another. It is good to talk!

"*… and supplication with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known unto God.*" I've highlighted the word 'thanksgiving' on purpose. I think this is the secret to killing worry. Gratitude turns our attention away from what we are worrying about to the blessings God has given instead; it stops us from 'tunnel-vision' worry. To do this, think about all the wonderful things God has blessed you with over the year. Here is a little exercise: write down all the good things God has given you in 2022. Focus

especially on the small things. Write it all down. Now, stand back and look. Experience proves God has helped you, and if God has helped (and provided for you), He will help you *now and in the future!* Someone once wrote,

> 'Almost one-half of a Christian's fears arise from anxiety about yesterday's troubles. The other half arise from our anxiety about tomorrow. Seldom do we have anxiety about what we experience *now*. To repel our fears, we must try to live by faith in the here and now of our life. The past we cannot alter; the future may never happen as we imagine.'

With this in mind, thank God. Spend time praising Him. Focus on the promises. Bless God for "all His benefits" – including the wonder of the cross – and practice gratitude by faith. Train your mind to thank God *more*. This takes time and discipline. Don't forget that this is ongoing. Learning to worry less and pray more is a skill we must improve every day. Some days will be better than others – and that's OK. God loves us despite our failures. Even the Apostle got it wrong occasionally and had to "learn" this skill! (e.g. 4:11)

"*and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" Our great God who is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" can give peace in the midst of worry (Eph. 3:20). So, ask God to give you peace whatever the circumstance. As Corrie Ten Boom said, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

Take one day at a time. Remember to watch your thoughts. The Christian's thought life is addressed in v.8. These things are easy to say and easy to write but difficult to practice. I suppose what I am trying to say is summed up beautifully in the words of Romans 8:32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

I pray this helps.

A Happy and Blessed New Year.

Yours in Christ,
Tom Budgen

THE CITIES OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

EPHESUS

(Acts 19)

Paul now moved on to Ephesus, where he met some disciples who had a religion which did not include the work of the Holy Spirit (vs. 1 & 2). Paul immediately saw the danger of such an empty religion, so he spoke to them about how the Holy Spirit needed to bring Christ into their hearts. This is the "way" of salvation (vs. 9 & 23).

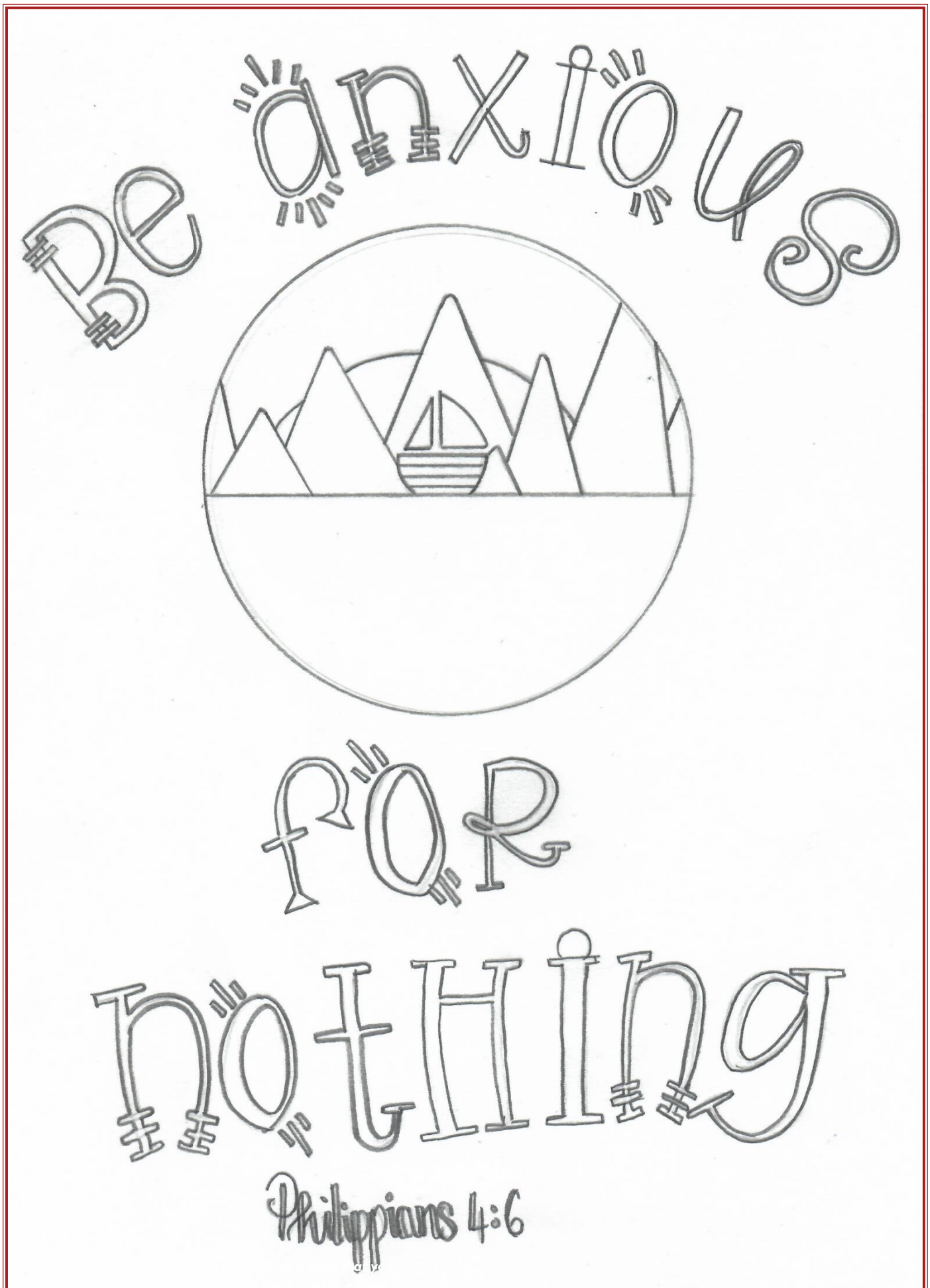
When he started preaching, there was opposition. This came from the devil who tried to copy God`s message. He always tries to do this (e.g. Matt. 13: 25 & 26).

Ephesus was a centre of idolatry. It sold idols to make money (v.24). Paul's teaching was opposed to idols. Paul said that only the true God should be worshipped, and worshipped in His way. This led to an uproar (vs. 28 & 29) but God rescued His servants from their anger.

What is an idol? An idol is whatever takes your mind away from God. What do you think about most? How do you spend your money? Do you use it to buy things which will distract you from thinking about God? Who or what do you live for? For Paul, there was only one answer: "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Is this your answer as well?

In Revelation chapter 2 the Lord Jesus had to warn the church of Ephesus that they had "left their first love" to Christ. They were spending far too much time on themselves and the world. They did not love Christ as much as they did at the start. Let us must pray that the Holy Spirit will keep our attention on Christ as we pass through this world. If we keep our eyes on Him we won`t go wrong.

Colour Me In!



PUZZLES

Kings called Herod

Find the answers in the wordsearch below

Herod was _____ when he heard about Jesus. Matt. 2 v 3

Herod _____ to know where Christ should be born. Matt. 2 v 4

Herod _____ the wisemen saying he wanted to worship Jesus. Matt. 2 v 8

Herod was _____ when the wise men didn't return. Matt. 2 v 16

Herod _____ all the babies under 2 years. Matt. 2 v 16

Herod _____ John the Baptist. Mark 6 v 16

Herod _____ his brother's wife. Mark 6 v 17

Jesus called Herod a _____ Luke 13 v 31 - 32

Herod _____ Jesus. Luke 23 v 11

Herod _____ James the brother of Jesus. Acts 12 v 1-2

Herod put Peter in _____ Acts 12 v 3-4

M	K	M	A	R	R	I	E	D
E	D	U	F	L	B	E	D	O
R	T	R	O	U	B	L	E	D
H	K	D	X	P	E	N	M	K
L	I	E	D	R	H	F	A	U
E	L	R	W	I	E	A	N	G
W	L	E	F	S	A	N	D	R
I	E	D	K	O	D	G	E	W
X	D	J	S	N	E	R	D	T
M	O	C	K	E	D	Y	D	N

There were a few kings called Herod in the Bible but they were all (circle the correct answer)

GOOD BAD

'Daily Readings for Teenagers' are now available to view at

www.harrisfccontinuing.org/for-teenagers

The Big Questions!

The following article is based on a talk delivered at the Ratagan Youth Conference in Lochalsh (Skye) in October 2022.

How do you reply when someone asks, "Is it easy to tell others I'm a Christian?"

This brings us to the topic of confession. To confess, in this sense, does not mean to confess sin to God. Rather, it means to tell everyone you believe Jesus died for your sin and that you are a Christian. It is an act of faith. To help, let us think about Nicodemus. Nicodemus is an example of someone who struggled to make a public profession. He was afraid of man but in the end, God helped Nicodemus.

Nicodemus, the seeker

We only read about Nicodemus in John's gospel. The first time we meet him is in John 3. Nicodemus was a religious teacher. We learn that he "came to Jesus by night." Nicodemus knew Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and wanted to meet Him, but because of the scribe's and Pharisees' dislike for Jesus, Nicodemus was scared to be seen with Him in public. This explains why Nicodemus came to Jesus secretly at night. Jesus, of course, was only too happy to see Nicodemus. He welcomed him with open arms.

Some Christians begin the Christian life like Nicodemus. They are nervous, tense and maybe even scared of what others say. They know the world hates the message of Christ. They know they will be hated as well. The Bible calls this "the fear of man." It is only natural to care what others think and say of you, but Jesus calls for an unashamed profession if we believe (e.g. Mark 8:38). Nicodemus struggled at the start, and even though his first steps toward Christ were timid and fearful, it didn't matter. They were still steps. Jesus still welcomed Him.

Nicodemus, the defender

The next time we encounter Nicodemus is in John 7: 45 – 53. These events took place 18 months later after John 3. What is Nicodemus doing? That's right – he is defending the Lord Jesus in the presence of His enemies! Nicodemus wanted Jesus to be treated fairly before the law. It was not a profession of faith, but Nicodemus still used the opportunity to say something in favour of Jesus, and that was brave. It was wrong to let wicked men say horrible things unchecked.

Again, some Christians are like Nicodemus here. They have yet to make a public profession but they cannot tolerate unkind comments about their Saviour. So, they say something: "Please stop using God's name as a swear!" "*Have you even read the Bible?*" A quiet word here and there – that's how it starts. Not all Christians grow at the same 'spiritual' speed. Some grow quickly like Paul. Others grow slowly like Nicodemus – but they still grow! (1 Cor. 12:6).

Nicodemus, the follower

The third and final time we see Nicodemus is in John 19: 38 – 40. There, we learn that it was the death of Jesus that finally caused Nicodemus to publicly let others know he was a Christian. He professed faith in Jesus and showed it by bringing "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight" to anoint the dead body. Nicodemus thought he had wasted his opportunity to make a public profession. He was disappointed with himself but he repented, plucked up the courage and 'went forward' and joined other believers. Little did he realise he unknowingly fulfilled Christ's command: "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Jesus told the disciples to remember His death. Nicodemus was not there that night but he still remembered Jesus in His death.

Nicodemus grew slowly in spiritual things but he still progressed, and in the end, the death of Christ forced him out into the open. He is like the blossoming of a flower: small growth at the start and full bloom at the end. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16). So, the answer to the question is no – it's not easy to profess faith in Jesus, but God can help us.

PUZZLES

Which King is it?

This King tried to kill the next person who would be King
_____

This King ate grass
_____

This King put one of the disciples in jail
_____

This King was a King's son
_____

This King killed a giant
_____

This King was 8 years old when he became King
_____

Latest entries

1st prize: Lily Macleod *(Tarbat)*

Runners up:
Kenny MacKinnon - Partick
Euan Grant, Seumas Grant - Knockbain Free Church
Eliana Kok - Smiths Falls **Bethany Blaney, Benjamin Blaney, Abigail Blaney, Seth McMurray - Ballyclare and Doagh**
Eilidh MacLeod, Charles Keir MacKay, Ellie Joy MacKay - Tarbat
Lauren Cormack - Inverness **Abigail Keddie - Dores**

Bethany Blaney *(Ballyclare and Doagh)*: **10 Entries**

Name: .....

Age: .....

Congregation: .....

Address: .....

.....

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PUZZLES & DRAWINGS

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Younger readers who find the questions too hard may like to do a drawing based on one of the articles and send it to the editor.

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