the Explorer

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Puzzles

Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:
Miss Anne Macaulay
30 Mackenzie Place,
Maryburgh IV7 8DY
Email: **macaulayanne@hotmail.co.uk**

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 same address.

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LOOK OUT IT'S A

The three teenage boys were having great fun on their surfboards. It was a typical Australian summer's day; the beach was crowded and the surf was good. One of the boys was called Adam and he had left his friends resting on the sand while he ventured out into the waves. Adam didn't see it at first but the shark had spotted Adam and was making straight for him! The first attack saw a chunk bitten off Adam's surfboard, knocking him into the water where he clung to the remains of his board. Circling around, the shark came at him again and he felt its huge teeth bite into his side. Somehow he managed to shake it off but any relief could only be temporary as it moved in, presumably for the kill! The authorities had no time to respond and Adam's friends could only watch in helpless horror from the shore.

UNEXPECTED HELP

By this time Adam was in deadly danger and it was right at that moment that help came from an unexpected source. Suddenly a group of dolphins appeared around the injured boy and started thrashing around in the water. The commotion they caused was enough to drive the shark away into deeper water. Despite his injuries Adam's life had been saved. Afterwards he told a local newspaper that he wished he could swim out to sea, find those dolphins and thank them. Of course he knew that was impossible but we can understand how he felt.

WORSE THAN A SHARK

We have an enemy who is far more dangerous than any shark: I mean the devil. Like the shark he watches for any opportunity to attack us and he shows no mercy. Just as the shark went for Adam when he was by himself so Satan likes to have us by ourselves and then come and attack. If he can keep us away from the

SHARK!

Bible, the church and Christian
things he finds it easier to injure us.
He comes with temptations to sin and
just like Adam didn't notice the shark at first, we often fail to see Satan's approach. He 'swims' up beside us so quietly he has often attacked us before we even know he is there. He is able to camouflage himself. The Bible even describes him coming, at times, looking like "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

HELP IS AT HAND

In the Bible the Lord warns us about Satan's ways but the Lord does more than just warn us.

He is able to come and rescue us out of the devil's clutches. Adam's friends were too far away to help but the Lord is never too far away. He promises to stay close to everyone who trusts in him. He is described as a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). Even if Adam's friends had been beside him they were no match for a shark and all of them could have been injured or even killed. For all Satan's power (and boasting) the Lord is able, with a word, to put him to silence and drive him away. The Lord is able to keep all His people safe and will bring them safely at last to the shore of eternity where Satan will never again attack or disturb them.

Adam was wounded in the shark attack and we are often wounded by the devil but, in the battle against sin and Satan, the greatest wounds of all were suffered by the Lord Jesus Christ. He died in order that sinners could be forgiven. He was wounded so that His people could be saved. Through His death, Satan and sin and death itself have been defeated and those who trust in Christ are safe for all eternity.

From the Editor

This is my final message to you as editor of the *Explorer*. After eight years my time with the *Explorer* has come to an end. The General Assembly in October 2020 appointed Rev Tom Budgen as the new editor and, I'm sure, you will join me in welcoming him to the editor's chair and wish him the Lord's blessing as he takes up his role.

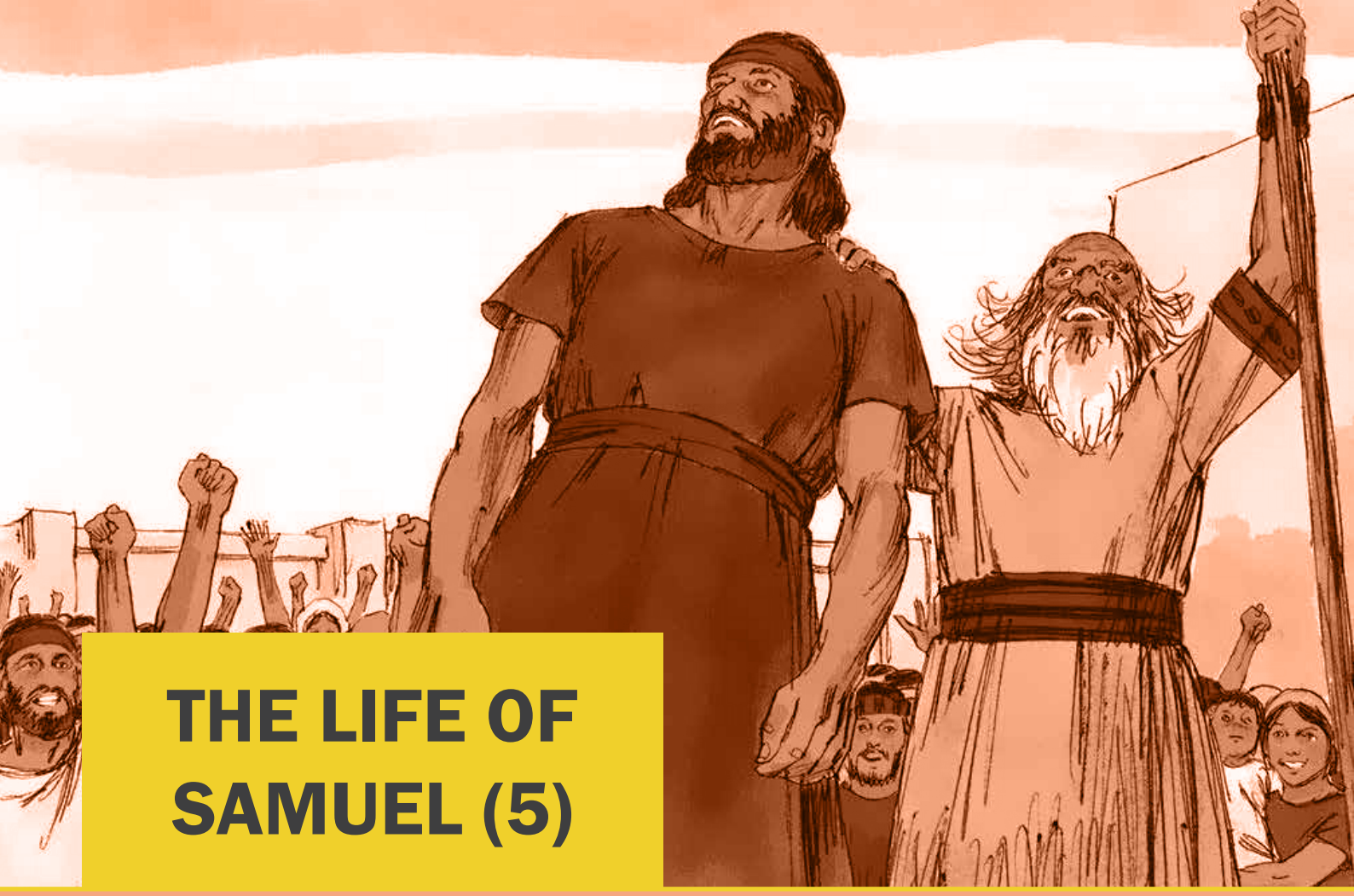
How time flies! Looking back I can hardly believe that eight years have passed since I wrote my first editorial. In these years we have seen many changes in the world and also in our own lives. All of us have grown older and many important things around us will have altered. We live in a world full of changes. Some of these changes are welcome but many of them are not. However, it is good to remember that there are some things which never change.

God doesn't change. Many people wish that God would change. They wish that His laws and His Word would change. Other people pretend that God has changed. They pretend that He has changed his mind about sin and how we are to live our lives. However, the true Christian is very thankful that God never changes. "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Malachi 3:6)

It is also true that our spiritual needs never change. It is as necessary for us to repent of our sins and come to trust in Christ alone as Saviour as it was for the people of Jesus' own day. He told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again and He is still sending us the same message. I am going to give the final word to King Solomon. When he was a young man he asked the Lord for wisdom and God answered his prayer. It is most unlikely that any of us will ever be a king like Solomon but no matter who we are we all need that same prayer. In Ecclesiastes chapter 12:1 Solomon wrote, "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".

Wishing you all the Lord's richest blessing.

Murdo A N Macleod



THE LIFE OF SAMUEL (5)

Last month we saw that Samuel's sons were wicked men and Israel did not want them to become leaders after their father. The people told Samuel that they wanted a king just like the other nations which were round about them. Samuel warned them that a king would bring sorrow and trouble into their lives but they would not listen to his advice. This month we shall look at Samuel and the first King over Israel, a man called Saul.

SAUL BEGINS WELL

God, in judgement, gave the nation of Israel the kind of king which they wanted and Samuel was told to publicly appoint him. (1 Samuel 8: 22) At first Saul was obedient to God and ruled well. When we first meet him in 1 Samuel he appears to be a humble young man and Samuel must have been very hopeful that he would turn out to be a good king.

However, as time went on, Saul increasingly wanted his own way and not God's. He failed a number of important tests and gave in to too many temptations. He showed that he still had a hard heart and was full of pride and jealousy, especially against young David. David was a godly boy who never did the king any harm; indeed he often helped Saul but Saul quickly forgot these things. How often we also want our own way and not God's. Perhaps for a while we obey the Lord but when temptations and tests come along, we show what we are really like. Saul reminds us that we all need new hearts and only God himself can give us a new heart.

Saul had many gifts; he was a 'choice young man'. (1 Samuel 9:2) He even looked like a king but as God would later remind Samuel God doesn't look on the outward appearance but on our hearts. When he made mistakes he did not ask God for forgiveness and instead became angry and resentful towards those who tried to give him good advice. Are you like that at times? Do you harden your heart against asking God for forgiveness and close your ears when someone reminds you that you should go to the Lord and seek his pardon and mercy?

SAMUEL IS SAD

When Samuel saw what Saul was really like it made him very sad. Saul had begun so well but without God's work and grace in his heart he soon failed in his leadership of the nation. Samuel had announced Saul's appointment as King of Israel but with great sorrow he had the difficult task of declaring to Saul and to the people that God had rejected Saul as king. (1 Samuel 15:26) Saul does not seem to have ever truly sought the Lord and appears to have died without faith and without the Lord in his life. What a warning Saul is against trusting in our own gifts and abilities. Like Saul the Lord may have given us good gifts but we need more than good gifts; we need the Lord himself in our souls. Gifts by themselves will not last and will bring us to the same unhappy end which awaited poor King Saul. Next month, however, we will learn about a new king whom God raised up in place of Saul.

The Christian Armour

4. The Soldier's Shoes

It is important to wear the right shoes, isn't it? The shoes you would wear running a race would probably not be the same ones you would wear walking through a muddy field or out in the snow. Over the past months we have been looking at the armour and weapons which the Lord has given to his people to assist them in their struggle with Satan and sin. In Ephesians chapter 6 we find a list of God's provisions. In our last article we thought about the breastplate of righteousness and before that we thought about the belt, or girdle, of truth. This month we are going to look at the next item: the shoes for the Christian soldier. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness: And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" (Ephesians 6: 11 & 14-15).

If it is important for all of us to have the right shoes at the right time, it is especially true for soldiers. The Christian has been given special shoes to help in the battles which will come. With these shoes the Christian soldier is prepared by God's grace to fight for, and under, God's leadership. The Apostle speaks of peace and we know that the Gospel is a message of peace. (Isaiah 57:19 & Ephesians 2:17). The Gospel received by faith brings peace to the conscience and having peace with God we are prepared for the war with sin and Satan. This peace gives energy to the soul.

Following Christ means travelling on a road that can be very rough at times and we might be afraid that the shoes will wear out, but the Lord ensures that they do not wear out and that the soldier endures to the end of the road (Deuteronomy 33:25). At other times we might be so weary that we are tempted to sit down and give up, but the Bible reminds us that we have to keep going and 'endure to the end' (Matthew 24:13). There will be defeats and discouragements but the Gospel brings peace and comfort in repentance.

As we walk the road of the Christian life we are to carry the message of the good news of God's peace with us. We are to tell others of Jesus as the only source of peace with God, and we are to strive to live at peace with those around us. Sometimes that is impossible without compromise, and we need special wisdom and strength at these times. At other times we need to watch out in case our proud, rebellious hearts bring war and trouble into our lives and the lives of others. We constantly need God's grace in order to watch what we say and how we act. Do you remember how Stephen, in the Book of Acts, behaved when he was attacked and eventually killed? He responded in a kind, peaceful way and, like Jesus, he was ready to pray for those who were persecuting him.

We walk on in the Christian life trusting in the peace which we have through Christ. 'I stand upon his merit, I know no other stand', says Samuel Rutherford. God gives the believer the readiness to follow Christ at whatever cost. Are you ready to serve the Lord? Are you ready to die in peace with God? Are you walking the Christian road wearing the shoes of the Gospel of peace?

A GLORIOUS PEARL

(Matt. 13:45 & 46)

Have you ever seen a pearl?

I remember seeing one once. It was beautiful.

People all over the world pay *lots* of money for pearls. Apparently, the most expensive pearl ever sold went for a staggering $32 million, about £23 million! It's hard to believe people would pay so much for such a small thing.

Well, people were the same in Jesus' day. Jesus spoke of a merchant man "seeking goodly pearls." He was a business man, and he would pay a lot of money for the right one.

A Rare Pearl

One day, he saw a *glorious* pearl. He had never seen one like this before. It was so precious. It was so beautiful. "Oh, if only it were mine!" he thought, "What can I do to get it?"

Perhaps you have been like this? Perhaps you have seen things in shop windows and thought, "I wish I could have that. If only I had enough money!"

The man couldn't stop thinking about the pearl. The more he tried to forget it, the more he wanted it. He tried to satisfy himself by looking at the collection he had built up over the years, and although they were lovely, none compared to *this* pearl.

The thought of someone else buying it made him uneasy. This was the only one! How much he wanted it for himself!

An Expensive Pearl

The pearl was the most expensive the merchant man had ever encountered. He had purchased expensive pearls before, but this one ranked above them all. It was even more expensive than $32 million! He realised he could not afford to buy it.

Then he had a thought. "What if I sold *half* of my collection of pearls? That should give me enough money to buy it."

So off he went to calculate half of the value of his treasure. But it still wasn't enough to buy the pearl. "Hmmm. Maybe," he pondered, "I should sell *all* of my collection. This will give me enough!"

So off he went again. But despite the tremendous value of all his collection, it *still* wasn't enough! He tried to shrug off the thought of buying it, just like before. But there was something that drew him to the pearl. "I *must* have it," he said to himself. Suddenly, he had a thought. It was a bold thought. It was a radical thought. It was even a bit *scary*. There was only one thing left for him to do.

A Prized Pearl

What do you think he did?

That's right.

He sold *everything*. "Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold *all* that he had, and bought it."

His house, his camels, his collection of pearls… even his most expensive clothes and hats! He sold the lot.

Now, he could buy the pearl. And off he went. Can you imagine how happy he was to have it at last?

This man wanted the pearl so badly he was willing to sell everything he owned. There are some people who will stop at nothing to get what they want. Others try but give up after a while, and fail.

Why did Jesus tell this parable? He wanted everyone to know His Kingdom was precious. So *precious* that many men and women, and boys and girls, have given

up everything to have Jesus and His salvation. Why do people do this? Because they realise His kingdom is *valuable*.

If you desire a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, you must give up everything that hinders you from coming to Him. You must give up your idols, whatever form they may take: - gardens, families, relationships, football, music, movies, video-games, friends and the like. All these things that fill your life and *stop* you from repenting and trusting in Jesus must go, just like the man in the parable who gave everything up to acquire the pearl.

I know of a man who once gave up drinking and smoking to have Jesus Christ. It was very difficult, but he realised how *precious* Jesus was. He knew Jesus could give him far more than what the world had to offer. He knew Jesus could give him a new heart, faith, salvation and an inheritance that never rusts or corrupts. This is what is involved in repentance. We must surrender all those sinful things that stop us from experiencing life and joy and peace in Jesus.

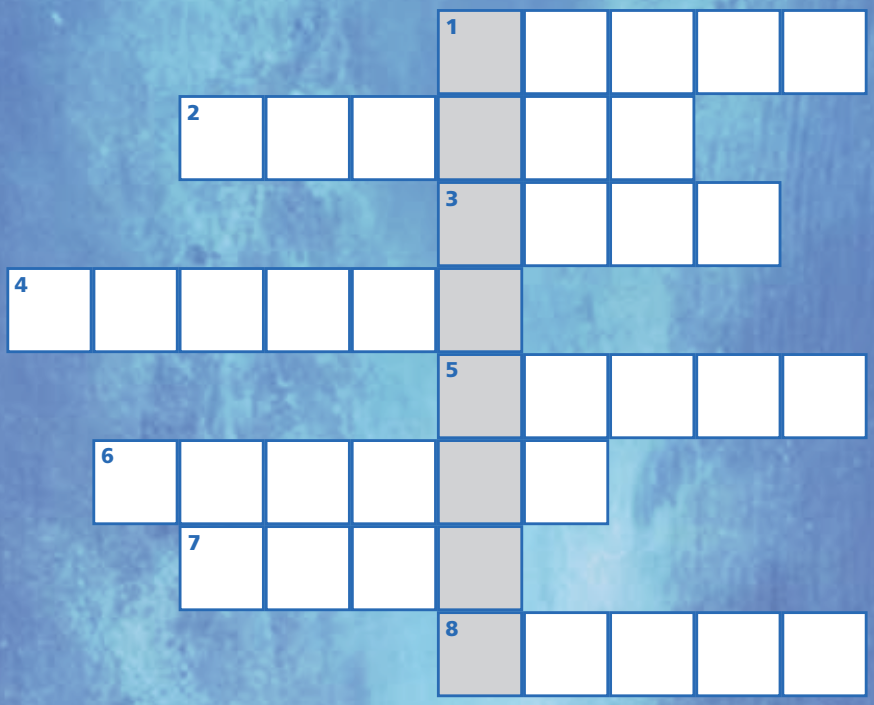
What about you? If Jesus – the Pearl of Great Price – is really *precious* you will give up those things that hinder you from coming to Him. But don't worry. He will give you strength to help you.

The man in the parable wanted the pearl so badly he went to great lengths to purchase it. Paul the Apostle wrote, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7). Paul gave up his friends and his reputation and his potential to have this treasure. Are you like Paul? The world looks like gold, but underneath it's just paint. It fades and rots and, in the end, looks ugly. Jesus is far more valuable than anything or anyone in this world. He is the Pearl of Great Price. Like the merchant man, have you forsaken all and followed Him? (Matt. 19:27)

Wilderness Journey

Write the answers to the questions in the grid. What do all the letters in grey spell?

1. The children of Israel ate this in the desert
2. A type of bird which they ate in the desert
3. Moses got water from this in the desert
4. Moses parted this with his Rod. R___ S___
5. The children of Israel were led by this during the day. C_____
6. Aaron and Hur held up Moses arms and God helped the people win the _____
7. The children of Israel were led by this during the night. F_____
8. When Moses cast the tree into the waters it made them S_____



Latest entries

1st prize: George Kenneth MacDonald - Stornoway

Runners up:

Summer Hall - Ayr
Abigail Blaney - BallyClare & Doagh
Faith MacDonald - Culloden Baptist
Hannah Keddie, Abigail Keddie - Dores
Lauren Cormack - Inverness
Elizabeth MacInnes - Lochalsh & Strath
Kenny Mackinnon - Partick
Chirsty Bella Morrison - Scalpay
Eliana Kok - Smith Falls
John MacDonald, Marybeth MacDonald, Peter MacDonald - Stornoway

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Chirsty Bella Morrison: 10 Entries
Marybeth MacDonald: 10 Entries

Name: .....

Age: .....

Congregation: .....

Address: .....

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In some previous issues of the magazine Abigail Blaney was identified with the wrong congregation.
We are happy to clarify that Abigail, who does the puzzles faithfully, belongs to Ballyclare & Doagh Free Church (Continuing).

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