

January 30th

Memory verse:

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

Luke 11:35

“Take heed” means “pay attention” or “take notice”. See below for more information about this verse.

Something to read¹



In the eighteenth century one of the most fashionable holiday resorts for well off people was the city of Bath. The city's hot springs and Roman Bath House were popular for people who drank or bathed in the mineral water for their health. All sorts of entertainment was provided for those who came to “take the waters” such as concerts, dancing, card playing and theatricals. The evangelist Charles Wesley called Bath “Satan's head-quarters”. He and his brother John as well as their fellow evangelist George Whitfield compared Bath to the wicked city of Sodom in the book of Genesis and lamented the lack of gospel preaching in the city. “Hath God left himself without witness?” wrote Charles Wesley in his journal when visiting the city. Here is how John Wesley describes a visit to Bath in 1739:

All Bath on Tuesday was big with expectation of what a great man² was to do to me there; and I was much entreated not to preach, “because no one knew what might happen.” By this report also I gained (I believe) a thousand new hearers of the rich and great of this world. I told them plainly “the scripture had concluded them all under sin,” high and low, rich and poor, one with another. They appeared not a little surprised and sinking apace into seriousness, when their champion [Beau Nash, Bath's Master of Ceremonies] appeared, and, having forced his way through the people, asked “by what authority I did these things.”

I answered, “By the authority of Jesus my Master, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury.”

He said “it was contrary to the Act of Parliament; there was an Act of Parliament against conventicles.”

I replied, “The conventicles there mentioned were seditious meetings. But there was no such here.”

He said, “Yes, it was; for I frighted people out of their wits.”

I asked if he had ever heard me preach. If not, how he could judge of what he never heard? He said, “By common report, for he knew my character.”

¹ Information from Stephen Blair Waddell *William Jay of Bath (1769-1853)* and other sources.

² Beau Nash the Master of Ceremonies at the various Bath entertainments.

I then asked, “Pray, sir, are you a justice of peace or the mayor of this city?”

Answer: “No, I am not.”

“Why then, sir, pray by what authority do you ask me these things?” Here he paused a little, and I went on: “Give me leave, sir, to ask, Is not your name Nash?” Answer: “Sir, my name is Nash.”

“Why then, sir, I trust common report is no good evidence of truth.” Here the laugh turned full against him, so that he looked about and could scarce recover.

Then a bystander said, “Sir, let an old woman answer him.” Then, turning to Mr. Nash, she said, “Sir, if you ask what we come here for, we come for the food of our souls. You care for your body: we care for our souls.” He replied not one word, but turned and walked away.

We immediately began praying for him, and then for all the despisers. As we returned, they hollowed and hissed us along the streets; but when any of them asked, “Which is he?” and I answered, “I am he,” they were immediately silent. Ten or twelve fine ladies followed me into the passage of Richard Merchant's house. I turned back to them, and told them I supposed what they wanted was to look at me, which they were very welcome to do. Perceiving them then to be more serious, I added: “I do not expect the rich of this world to hear me; for I speak plain truth – a thing you know little of, and do not desire to know.” A few words more passed between us, and, I hope, not in vain.



It was to minister at the Argyle Street Independent Chapel in this city that young William Jay (1769-1853) was called on **30 January** 1791.

William Jay was the son of a poor stone mason. He was converted through the witness of Mr and Mrs Turner, themselves converts of Whitfield who superintended a Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Jay's native Tisbury. He came to the midweek services still wearing his stone mason's apron. This sounds like an unpromising candidate for a successful pastorate in fashionable and rich city such as Bath.

Mr and Mrs Turner had encouraged the young Jay to give up his work as a stone mason and train to be a preacher. This he had done under the guidance of Cornelius Winter of Marlborough who sent the young man out to preach in nearby villages. By the time he was nineteen he had preached some hundreds of sermons and was invited to preach at the large independent Surrey Chapel pastored by Rowland Hill in London.

Jay quickly became a very popular preacher in Bath despite his lowly origins. He continued to preach the “old fashioned” message of repentance from sin and faith in the saving death of Jesus Christ that had been rejected in Bath in the days of Wesley. But now the chapel had to be enlarged to accommodate those who wanted to hear William Jay preach the gospel. The Chapel flourished and led the way in evangelism and outreach in the city. The prayers of Wesley had been answered!

An invention and some map work



On 30th January 1790 the *Original*, the first purpose built lifeboat, went out on her first rescue mission. Stationed at South Shields, she rescued some sailors who were shipwrecked on Herd Sand. You can see what the *Original* looked like in the old picture on the left. It was built as the result of a competition for a lifeboat design, although it was not made exactly like any of the entries submitted. You can see that it has no rudder but is steered by means of an oar. The shape is designed so that if the middle of

the boat becomes swamped, the back and front remain useable and out of the water. To aid buoyancy the boat was covered in cork which was secured with copper plates. A curved keel made for easier steering in tough conditions and the boat was designed to be rowed in either direction. If you find South Shields and Herd Sand on a map you will be able to imagine what a dangerous area this was for sailors. The Royal National Lifeboat Institute still does good work today. Do you know where is the nearest RNLi lifeboat station to your home?³

Something to think about and something to do

Read Luke 11:33-36. You will find today's memory verse in the middle of these verses. Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) who was born on 30th January was a particularly clear thinker who understood how important it is for us to use our minds properly. Here is how he explained these verses in his book for children *Everybody Can Know*:

Do you have two candles? Two oil lamps would be even better, or two candles with glass chimneys



round them. First, Jesus spoke of the fact that we are the light of the world. Yes, we are meant to be giving light (the true truth) to those who are in darkness, so we are not to hide our light. ...Jesus said we are not to hide our light with evil works either, because if we are doing sinful things, people can't pay much attention to what we are saying about truth: the light is being hidden by the dirt of our wrong doings. So in a way this is saying that the actions which are seen by people are going to make a difference to the light we give out. This is very important.

Light your two candles or lamps now. One candle, or lamp should have a very sparkling clean glass lamp chimney round it or it should have a piece of glass held in front of it that is clean. The other candle or lamp should have a very dirty lamp chimney or a dirty piece of glass held in front of it. ...

One light is light now – the other light is dark. Do look well at the light that is light, and the light that is dark. Draw pictures of lamps that are sparkly light, and lamps that are dingy and dark. Get this fixed in your mind, and “see it” in your memory, or imagination... dark light, light light.

[Jesus is telling us]... “Watch out that the light which is in you is not darkness.” In Matthew 6:23 it is even clearer... “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” ... [S]ome people talk about prayer, and God, and they don't mean the true God at all, and they aren't talking about true prayer, true talking to the true God at all...

3 You can find the answer here: <https://rnli.org/find-my-nearest/lifeboat-stations>

Think carefully now. If people *think* they have the truth, something true when they talk about hundreds of thousands of gods and prayer being incense sticks or prayer being pieces of paper going around on wheels; if people *think* they are giving truth to others when they teach that Jesus is just a man; or that God did not create man in the first place; or that the Bible is not true when it speaks about the universe and about history; or when they teach that you get to heaven by being good, and you don't need to have a Messiah or Saviour; if people *think* they have a light, and if all the time the light is *darkness* – Jesus said that that darkness is very terrible indeed, it is a great darkness. How dangerous it is to think you have a light, and then walk by a precipice, with a gorge thousands of feet below, or a slippery cliff with the sea pounding below... when your light is darkness.

“It doesn't matter,” some people say, “It doesn't matter what you believe, just as long as you believe something. If it makes you feel good inside, it doesn't matter what religions, philosophy, rules you live by.”

Does it matter if there is such a thing as truth? Yes, says Jesus, it matters, because there is truth and there is that which is the opposite, not true. There is true light and there is darkness acting as light. Be sure, Jesus says, that your light is the real light.