

26th July

Memory verse:

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven:
the lightnings lightened the world:
the earth trembled and shook. Psalm 77:18

In this Psalm the Psalmist is in deep trouble. He even wonders if God has forgotten him. Then he remembers how God led his people out of their trouble in Egypt. The thunder and lightning remind him of God's almighty power. We looked at thunderstorms on 23rd July. More about thunder today!

An adventure story¹

On the evening of July 26th, 1959, William J. Rankin, a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Marines, was flying a Crusader F8U jet fighter over New York. He was nearly nine miles up in a cloudless sky, his plane was running beautifully, and he was on his way back to base in South Carolina after a routine flight. Over Atlantic City there were scattered clouds and as he approached Norfolk, Virginia, he could see that the sky was filling up with heavy thunder clouds. This was no problem for a jet plane as good as the F8U. Rankin went into a climb until, at 48,000 feet, he could see the storm below him.

Suddenly there was a rumbling noise in the fuselage and the "Fire" control flashed on. Then his engine stopped completely. There was no sign of fire but the plane, still climbing, was quite dead.

Rankin had to think fast. When the plane's speed dropped to nothing it would stall and spin earthwards; there was only one thing left to do. He must eject himself into the cold thin air, exchanging a temperature of 75 degrees F. in the cockpit for a deep freeze of 70 below zero. And he was nearly 50,000 feet above the earth.

He pulled a handle and the ejection seat kicked him out. The pain of the intense cold soon turned to numbness and was replaced by the terrible pains of decompression, caused by the rarefied air.

He cartwheeled through the sky until his parachute opened automatically at 10,000 feet, pulling him up from a falling speed of 100 mph to 10mph. Then he realised he was going to fall right through the centre of the storm.

The first shock from the storm hit him like a tidal wave of air and sent him soaring up. Next, he was falling through angry, boiling clouds, black and grey and white; the thunder, the lightning, the hail and the rain had yet to come.

When the thunder exploded around him, he was grateful for the helmet that protected his ears from the worst of the blasts. He felt the thunder in every bone and muscle, battering him from all sides like the waves of turbulent air.

He seemed to be surrounded by the lightening, in great blue jagged sheets like blades, threatening to slice him in two. He felt a part of the storm as he was buffeted this way and that, tossed up and slung down, whirling round like a top, then plummeting down again.

All the time it was raining torrents so that Rankin thought he would drown in mid-air. Then the hail struck. He was afraid to open his eyes but as the hailstones rattled off his helmet and pounded his body they felt as large as baseballs.

¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 2 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

Suddenly he realised that the air was smoother, the hail had stopped, the rain was less heavy. He was out of the storm at last, after nearly forty minutes, and floated gently to earth, bruised, battered and bleeding, but alive.

For many years William Rankin was the only person to have survived falling through a thunderstorm in this way. Then in 2007 a German paraglider, Ewa Wiśnierska, had a similar experience while training in Australia, being sucked up to over 32,000 ft. by a storm cloud which tossed her around for over three hours. She landed with minor injuries but a colleague caught up in the same storm was killed.

Make a parachute

We used to have fun as children making parachutes like this one. We used a handkerchief and would drop our poor figures from a first-floor window! However, I think the method described below would work better.

Materials:

a plastic bag or light material

scissors

light string, thread or sewing cotton

a little figure e.g. Lego or something similar to act as a weight.

Instructions:

Cut your plastic bag so that you have a big square of thin plastic. Now cut off each corner so that you have an octagonal shape.

In the centre of each side near the edge cut or punch a small hole. This is to attach the strings.

Cut eight pieces of string/thread all the same length and tie one end of each to your figure.

Now your parachute is ready to test. It should float down to the ground slowly. If it does not fall straight, try making a very small hole right in the centre of the parachute.

Something to read

On **26 July** 1833, Wilberforce heard of government concessions that guaranteed the passing of the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery. Having abolished the slave trade in 1807, Britain's House of Commons was now set to ban slavery itself. When William Wilberforce, who had spent most of his life crusading against slavery, heard the news, he said, "Thank God I have lived to witness [this] day." He died three days later. What exactly was the slavery that caused so much concern and how did it come to be abolished?

The Abolition of Slavery²

In the colonies of the West Indies sugar was produced and exported. A large labour force was required for this and it was provided either by prisoners who had been transported as punishment or by black slaves imported from Africa. In the picture you can see a slave auction. The trade in slaves was profitable and Liverpool was the main slaving port in Europe. A movement was begun, largely by Evangelical Christians, to agitate for the abolition of the slave trade. In 1772 it had been decided that a slave became free when he set foot on British soil: slavery did not



² Adapted from *The Story of God's Dealings with our Nation* Volume 2 which is available here:

<https://www.creationresearchstore.com/s/search?q=The%20Story%20of%20Gods%20Dealings%20with%20our%20Nation>. A version of this chapter also appears on *The Mothers' Companion Flashdrive* available here: <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

exist in Britain. But this did not apply to the colonies. In 1787 William Wilberforce, an Evangelical Anglican, joined the Abolition Society and became its leader. Wilberforce was a friend of Pitt and to start with it looked as if the prospects of success were good. However, the outbreak of the French Revolution caused all reforms of this type to come under suspicion. Pitt refused to advance the cause of freedom for the slaves and no progress was made until after his death.

A bill was eventually advanced by Fox and passed into law in 1807. This made it illegal for Englishmen to take part in the slave trade. This had a beneficial effect on the whole slave trade for "... the maritime predominance of England was such that no power would seriously dispute her determination that the slave trade should stop, if she once made up her own mind."¹⁸ Slavery itself was still legal in the colonies and Wilberforce and his friends continued the campaign. In 1822 the Anti-Slavery Society was formed with the aim of abolishing slavery itself, not just the trade in slaves, everywhere.

William Wilberforce continued working with another Evangelical Anglican, the Earl of Shaftesbury, towards the goal of the complete abolition of slavery. For years Christians campaigned and protested against slavery. Some, like William Carey, never ate any sugar because it was produced by slave labour. In the first year after the passing of the Reform Bill, slavery was abolished in the British colonies and the enormous sum of 20 million pounds was granted as compensation to the slave owners. This was a generous act when there was still great poverty in Britain itself. "The generous instincts of the nation had, however, been aroused. The people had just been redeemed [by the Reform Bill] from what had been considered by them to be political slavery, and they seemed truly animated by the spirit of the divine precept, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'"³ Wilberforce lived just long enough to hear the news that the compensation had been granted. The compensation addressed one of the great problems associated with the abolition of slavery.

³Anon., *Chambers's Historical Readers* Book 4 (London, 1883), p. 165.