

September 7th
Memory Verse

When thou passest through the waters,
I will be with thee;

and through the rivers,
they shall not overflow thee:

when thou walkest through the fire,
thou shalt not be burned;

neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Isaiah 43:2

Something to read from history¹

On September 7th 1940, the German air force, the *Luftwaffe*, began a concentrated bombing attack on the major cities of Britain. This series of raids lasted until mid-1941 and became known as the “Blitz”. London was bombed more heavily and more frequently than any other city and in the following extract, Edward Murrow, an American reporter, gives his description of one night's air raid.

For three hours after the night attack got going, I shivered in a sandbag crow's-nest atop a tall building near the Thames. It was one of the many fire-observation posts. There was an old gun barrel mounted above a round table marked off like a compass. A stick of incendiaries bounced off roof-tops about three miles away. The observer took a sight on a point where the first one fell, swung his gun-sight along the line of the bombs and took another reading at the end of the line of fire. Then he picked up his telephone and shouted above the half gale that was blowing up there, “Stick of incendiaries – 190 and 220 – about three mile away”.

Five minutes later a German bomber came boring down the river. We could see his exhaust trail like a pale ribbon stretched straight across the sky. Half a mile downstream there were two eruptions and then a third closer together. The first two looked as though some giant had thrown a huge basket of flaming golden oranges high in the air. The third was just a balloon of fire enclosed in black smoke above the house-tops. The observer didn't bother with his gun sight and indicator for that one. Just reached for his night glasses took one quick look, picked up his telephone, and said, “Two high explosives and one oil bomb”, and named the street where they had fallen.

There was peace and quiet inside for twenty minutes. Then a shower of incendiaries came down in the far distance. They didn't fall in a line. It looked like flashes from an electric train on a wet night, only the engineer² was drunk and driving his train in circles through the streets.

Half-an-hour later a string of fire bombs fell right beside the Thames. Their white glare was reflected in the black, lazy water near the banks and faded out in midstream where the moon cut a golden swathe broken only by the arches of famous bridges.

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

2 American term for an engine driver.

We could see little men shovelling those fire bombs into the river. One burned for a few minutes like a beacon right in the middle of a bridge. Finally those white flames all went out. No one bothers about the white light, it's only when it turns yellow that a real fire has started.

If there are any words in the report that you do not understand use a good dictionary to look them up. I have highlighted a few terms you may not know in **turquoise**. If you do not live near London find out which city nearest to you suffered during the Blitz. What do you think happened to the information provided by the fire-observers? If you read the lesson for May 7 you may remember the bicycle hero, Ronald Heys. A sixteen year old boy scout, it was his job to cycle from the fire service headquarters, where the messages from the observers were received, to the teams of firemen on duty wherever they were at the time. He carried the messages so that the firemen could know where to go next. He had to get to them as quickly as possible so that as soon as one blaze was under control, men and appliances could be moved off to the next one. From the information received from the observers the men at the fire service HQ could work out which team was nearest and should be alerted.

Helping younger ones understand

Depending on ages etc. either their grandparents or great grandparents will have lived through the Second World War. Explain that an enemy wanted to destroy our country at that time but that God graciously made us strong and able to defend ourselves. Many boys and girls had daddies who had to go away to be brave soldiers, defending our country. Others were sailors or flew aeroplanes. Those who were too old or not fit to go did fire watching work (as above) and helped to take care of families. If you have any old photos of grandparents as children or of great grandparents this would be a good time to get them out and have a look. Learning the memory verse helps us understand that God looks after his children.

Something to write

The American, Edward Murrow (1908-1965), was a famous wartime reporter. He pioneered many techniques of radio journalism such as collating the reports of a number of radio correspondents in different places in the form of a "News Round Up." Read through his report again and pick out the things that make it give such a vivid picture of the Blitz to his American listeners. Older children may like to pick out the metaphors and similes Murrow uses to make his report come alive. Now see if you can try your hand at being a reporter! Notice that Edward Murrow spent time with the fire-watchers and took careful note of what they did. He could not even ask them questions – they were too busy – he observed very accurately and then wrote his report. Think of something that happens in your own area or even your own family that you could make a short report about. It could be something like fixing a problem with the car, planting something in the garden or even cooking something. Do you have a friend or relative who can fly a kite, mend a bike puncture, paint a picture or make jam? Ask if you can watch. Make very careful notes of what you see, hear, smell. If you are interested in football or some other sport you could write a report of a match or competition you have seen. Are you going to listen to a symphony orchestra or a piano recital? Take your notebook along and make notes about everything you can. Now take your notes and work them into a paragraph that is as vivid a description of the activity you have chosen as possible. Think of someone who has never seen jam made or heard an orchestra or flown a kite and try to interest them in the subject.

If, when you have finished this exercise, you find you have enjoyed doing it, there may be ways of taking it further. Local newspapers are sometimes grateful for contributions, especially the free newspapers who have to provide interesting content if they are to attract the advertisers who provide their revenue. Look to see if your local newspaper has a regular sports report – if sport

interests you. If they do not already have a column then send in a report of a local match or competition and they may print it. Has your church held any special service such as a Sunday School prize giving or a harvest festival recently? Write something about it, being sure to give your church's name and address and the times of services, explaining that everyone is welcome to come. If your piece does not get published, don't give up. Keep trying and your writing will improve especially if you ask as many people as you can to read it and make comments.

If you are a member of a local home education group you might be able to get together with friends and produce a little magazine of your own now and then. You could let any friends or family have a copy for the cost of paper and ink. If you like the idea, ask around; you may find you have friends who enjoy writing, drawing, making up crossword puzzles or taking photos who would be able to contribute.

Something for younger ones to make

Read the history of the three young men and the fiery furnace in Daniel chapter 3. It is quite easy to understand if read aloud to young children directly from the Bible with a little explanation as you go along. You could adapt the words yourself for very young children. They will understand how it relates to the memory verse. Help them to make a large newspaper style page about the event. It could include a headline, a picture, the outline of events in simple words and large letters set out as a newspaper column, and the memory verse. This could be put up on the wall or they could be encouraged to "read" it themselves and show it to family and friends.

Something to read for older ones

Probably the most famous "school story" of all time is *Fifth Form at St Dominics* by Talbot Baines Reed (1852-1893). Talbot Baines Reed, whose father owned a London printer's type foundry, was something of a journalist himself. *Fifth Form at St Dominics* was first published in the Religious Tract Society's *Boys' Own Paper*, to which he was a regular contributor. Without spoiling the plot I can tell you that a prominent feature is the fifth form newspaper and the journalistic efforts of the boys to get it together. If you can, request a copy from your public local library. If all else fails it is available on Project Gutenberg and the Internet Archive. Talbot Baines Reed was a Christian and his Christian principles and outlook come over very naturally in the book.

