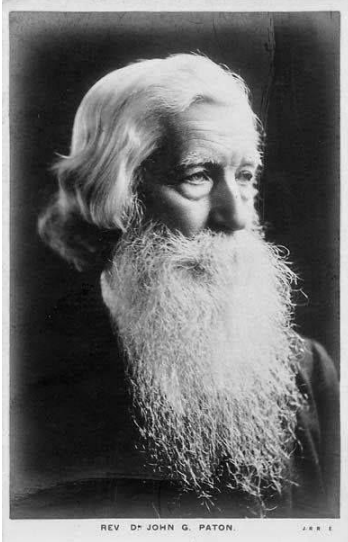


May 9, 2020

## Good morning, Everybody.



Many of you have read the delightful autobiography of John Paton, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish missionary to the New Hebrides.

One its most delightful sections tells of the sturdily consistent Christian home in which he and his eight brothers and sisters were raised and prepared for the Lord's service. Several pages relate the family's Lord's Day observances, which included special Bible readings in the evening, memorizing and discussing the *Shorter Catechism*, and the telling of *Pilgrim's Progress*.



The church at which the family worshipped was distant in Dumfries; a full four-mile walk from their home. For some forty years John's father, James, undertook this trip back and forth (8 miles round trip) every Lord's Day; sometimes accompanied by the entire family, sometimes with only the children, and sometimes, of necessity, all alone.

John recounts that during those many years, his father missed the morning church service only three times; once because the snow was so deep that he couldn't find his way and had to return home, once because ice had formed on the road so dangerously that he fell several times and couldn't go further, and once because of a terrible outbreak of cholera.

Cholera is an infection caused by eating food or drinking water contaminated with a certain kind of bacteria. But where public conditions are especially unsanitary, that bacteria can be transmitted from person to person. During the particular cholera outbreak that kept Mr. Paton from making the trip to church, there were civil restrictions against public gatherings (just as we're experiencing during this corona virus crisis). Even travel between towns and villages was prohibited. But Mr. Paton was so famed for his dogged consistency, come wind come weather, that some of the local villagers feared that he would attempt the trip to church despite the restrictions. So a small group of them went to the Paton home on

Saturday and made a rather pathetic appeal to his wife, urging her to exert whatever influence she had with her husband in order to keep him at home the next day! John clarified in his autobiography that they really didn't need to fear, however, for his father, he said, would never knowingly allow his devotion to church attendance to put the life of anyone else at risk.

But what a blessed testimony to a layman's love of the assembling of saints on the Lord's Day.

One of our church history tour groups visited Torthorwald where the Patons lived. I didn't take this picture, but I thought that you might like to see the family gravestone in the parish churchyard.



Evening services were seldom held in those days. But in the Paton home, Lord's Day evenings continued what had been heard in the morning and afternoon meetings. Mr. Paton would *parade across and across our flag-floor, telling over the substance of the day's sermons to our dear mother, who, because of the great distance and because of her many living "encumbrances," got very seldom indeed to the church. . . . How he would entice us to help him to recall some idea or other, praising us when we got the length of "taking notes" and reading them over on our return. . . . There were eleven of us brought up in a home like that; and never one of the eleven, boy or girl, man or woman, has been heard, or ever will be heard, saying that Sabbath was dull or wearisome for us.*

## Our Own Preparations

I trust that you'll make a good use of today so that you'll be in a favorable position to delight undistractedly in the Lord's Day tomorrow. Try to tie up all the loose ends, get your e-mail answered, plan ahead, and try to get everyone to bed a little early. Then rise up tomorrow morning in the frame in which you expect to rise on the day of resurrection; bright, happy, engaged in the heavenly things that thrill your soul. Embrace with all your heart *the good part which shall not be taken away* from you (Luke 10:42).

As we anticipate tomorrow, here's another installment of George Swinnock's "Good Wish for the Lord's Day."

*I wish that I may call the Lord's Day my delight, it being a day wherein I enter into the suburbs of the holy city, and begin that work of praising, pleasing, and enjoying my God, which I hope to be employed in to eternity. . . . The Lord's Day is an excellent resemblance of my future blessedness, wherein I shall enjoy my Saviour fully, and my God shall be all in all to me. Lord, let never this day pass without some taste of those celestial pleasures.*

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick