

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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# **The Pastor's Letter**

## **“Paul's old Cloak Left at Troas”**

Dear Friends,

One of the great devices that our human heart employs to escape the rigours and irksomeness of the sacrificing side of the Christian life, is the thought and the idea that the men and women on the pages of the Bible were absolutely unique in every way, and so, quite beyond compare, imitation, or emulation by us. Without a doubt, the vast majority of those ancient saints rose head and shoulders above the head of any of us today, and were very often gifted and endowed by the Lord in a way unparalleled at the present.

Be that as it may, however, we use the Word of God wrongly when we use the exploits of the saints of the past as a motive to idleness and indifference rather than a spur to endeavour, just because we have been convinced in our hearts that we can never measure up to their unique performances or extra-special lives.

Now, it is surely to help us to guard against that crippling idea that the Word of God so often shows these mighty men and women of the past in some particular situation where we cannot but fail to realise that they were men and women “of like passions” with ourselves – compassed about with a dozen-and-one infirmities and having to live in these mortal “tents” as we have to live in them. Possibly one of the most vivid words in the whole of the Bible concerning this is found in Paul's second epistle to Timothy where he begins to round off that epistle in chapter four with various requests and directives to his younger fellow-labourer in the gospel. By this time, he is “such an one as Paul the aged.” He has spent his life in the cause of the gospel, and is now imprisoned for the witness and the testimony of Christ. He is anxious to stir up Timothy to “come shortly” unto him, and he remembers with a sad and sorrowing heart how Demas has forsaken him, because he has fallen in love with the world. Titus has gone to Dalmatia, Crescens to Galatia, Tychicus he has despatched to

Ephesus, Alexander the coppersmith has done him much wrong, when he has been called to make his defence no man has “stood” by him.

What issues are raised in that parting letter to Timothy, and what eternal matters are dealt with as the great apostle’s pen runs to the end of that parchment. And yet, right in the centre of all those things comes that never-to-be-forgotten word of request to Timothy that shows us our “brother and fellow saint,” and leaves us without excuse in the cost of discipleship. “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me ... *the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee ...*”

What a telling and significant word that is. At first glance, and if we take no more than a first glance, we may well conclude that it is a trivial matter and hardly worthy of the great apostle’s hand – especially as his days and writing material are now coming to a close. But no, the Holy Spirit of God sees fit to have it recorded. And the purpose of its presence is, surely, to set before the continuing church of Christ on the earth the ever-abiding principles of the cost of discipleship for every age and for every saint in every age.

We do well to weigh the “human-ness” of that request of the mighty apostle. As we have said, he is now “Paul the aged.” In a very short time he will be “slain for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” And as he looks to the approaching winter and its cold icy blasts swirling through that Roman prison, he has one request to make of Timothy – when he comes to visit him with the warmth of Christian fellowship and love, will he also bring with him the warmth of that old cloak that he left at Troas with Carpus? Such a request never fell from the lips of a man that was ever anything more than a man. And if we endeavour to hide behind some form of *unique* humanity in the saints of the Bible as a reason for not being of the same spirit of selfless sacrifice in the cause of the gospel, we only betray the fact that we have, indeed, used their lives in a wrong way, and have fallen victim to the deceitfulness of that deceiving heart that beats within us.

We do well to recount the early days of the apostle Paul: his standing was a noble one in the nation of Israel; remember how he enumerates all his claims to fame and righteousness before the Philippians? He was circumcised the eighth day, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the stock of Benjamin, etc. He had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and, as many believe, would have been successor to “the chair of systematic theology” in the schools of the Rabbis. The “fringes” on his garments would have long, his “phylacteries” large, and his robes flowing. What an absolute contrast is summed up in that one request – “The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee ...” What absolute devastation is levelled at the idea that earthly prosperity and possession may be equated with rightness before God. Here is the greatest servant of the gospel that the world has ever seen, and as his life ebbs to a close in that Roman prison his worldly goods is summed up in an old cloak, six hundred miles away at Troas.

“Comparisons are odious,” they say, and very often, they are. We live in a day and in a country of super-abundance, when, in spite of all our complaints, we have received a multitude of provision. Therefore, the thought of being reduced to Paul’s condition appears unrealistic to us. But, we set aside the principle of sacrifice in the cause of the gospel at our peril, and very often completely miss the thought that the more we have received from the Lord, the more we have to sacrifice to the Lord.

However, the important thing to note is this, that when the Holy Spirit of God causes that request to be written and recorded in His Word there is a double edge to the purpose. In the first place, it shows us the sacrificing spirit of that great apostle, that at the end of a life that could have been lived in a far, far different way, he has but one old cloak, and that, so many miles away. But, over and above that, it shows us his great need and his great desire to have that cloak ere the winter winds begin to howl. It is a man, then, that makes the request. Not a super-man that has nothing to say to us in our own day or in our own lives, but an “old” man at this particular time, whose blood is, no

doubt, running thinner than it used to do, and has his human needs for his very human life.

“The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.” It would even try and rob the Lord of the “reasonable service” of His people today; and not only that, it would even endeavour to use the very word of God itself as the instrument to commit the robbery. Brethren! We are ever compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses; let us always try to run “lawfully” – according to the “rules” of the race, that we might attain the crown.

Yours sincerely,  
W.J. Seaton.



## Sermons in Candles

By C.H. Spurgeon  
(part 2)



Outside some of the older meeting-houses there used to be a wooden stand near the graveyard gate, on which a lantern was placed with a candle inside it, to light the way to the place where "Prayer was wont to be made." The natural light was dim in those times; but I am old fashioned enough to believe that the gospel light was in many a lowly sanctuary far more brilliant than it is today in mimic gothic chapels. The blaze of “Modern Thought” which pleases lovers of novelty does not guide the perplexed to heaven, nor cheer the passage of the departing through the valley of the shadow of death.

Remember that remarkable parable of the woman who had lost her piece of money. The question is put in Luke chapter 15 verse 8, “What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find

it?" In this way must we look for lost souls with the light of the gospel, and the broom of the law. You must be at some expense if you would find the lost! You must light a candle, and let it burn up. You must make a little dust, too; for nothing worth doing will be accomplished without a stir. Yet dust-making is not all. Some people think that you will find all the lost pieces of money by merely making dust enough, and noise enough; but they are wrong. There must be more light than dust. Nothing can be done without the light of the candle. Instruction must be given, as well as excitement created. Indeed, we must not be content



either with the dust or the light; we may not rest until we spy out our lost treasure, and place it in safety.

One allusion I will venture to mention, though the word employed is "lamp". David says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."



David drew his comparison from what is seen every night in an oriental city. He who goes out into the street at night in an eastern town is bound to carry a lantern with him. You would find it very necessary if you were there, if only because of the dogs that prowl about for their living. They are very fond of shin bones, and they do not like them any the less if they happen to be alive, with a little meat upon them. This very common lantern with which children are so pleased, resembles what David

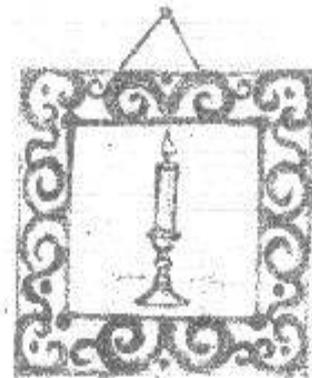
used; for such things in the east undergo little or no change. The proper use of such a lantern was to guide the feet, and this is the use of the Word of God. Certain brethren hold it up so as to see the stars, hoping to find out what is going to happen next week or next year.

How great they are over seals and trumpets! One admires the depth and the darkness of their research. We may leave them to their discoveries, time will show whether they are correct or not. The Bible is a blessing to us in many ways; but he is wisest who makes it his “Every Day Book.” Read the prophecies, prize the promises, but fail not, by God’s grace, to practice the precepts.

The candle to the right of the page is a very simple affair – “Field’s Self-fitting Candle”, - but it is very handy. You see, owing to the shape of its lower end, the candle will fit into any candlestick, whether it be large or small. A man of this sort makes himself useful anywhere. In poverty, he is content; in wealth, he is humble. If he can preach, he will do so; and if that is beyond his capacity, he will teach in the Sabbath school. Like the holy missionary, Brainerd, if he cannot convert a tribe, he will, even on his dying bed, be willing to teach a poor child his letters.



Here is the picture of a candle. In artistic circles, the drawing of an object may cost more than the object itself. No doubt a well-painted picture of a candle would cost as much as would light us for many a month, and yet it would never yield to our necessity a single beam of light. So, the resemblance of true Godliness costs a man far more care and trouble than the genuine article would involve, and yet it is nothing after all.



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“While Ananias looked at Saul, the Lord was looking at Paul; while Ananias spake of a persecutor, God was taking knowledge of a preacher; and while he pointed to him as a tare fit only to be burned up, Christ was gathering him into His heavenly barn as a vessel of election unto honour.”

John Crysologus



## Gleanings in the Psalms (Psalm 61)

This psalm was, no doubt, written by David during one of those times when he had been driven to the mountains and so, away from the Holy Tabernacle and the things of his God. This is what caused his heart to be “overwhelmed.” “To be absent from the place of divine worship was a sore sorrow to saints in the olden times; they looked upon the tabernacle as the centre of the world, and they counted themselves to be at the fag-end of the universe when they could no longer resort to the sacred shrine.” (Spurgeon.) Being in this position, David does the only thing possible and cries unto the Lord to be led to that Rock and strong tower where he can be sustained until that day, when in God’s mercy, he can return and “perform” his “vows” in the courts of God’s house again. (Verse 8)

**Verse 1. “Hear my cry, O God ...”** There is in this expression an endeavour to approach unto God; as you do when you cry after one whom you see at a distance, and are afraid will go farther away. It is the great work of faith to cry out after God when you see Him to be at a distance, lest at the next turn He should be quite out of sight. Crying to the Lord supposes Him to be withdrawing or departing.

*John Owen*

**Verses 2-3. “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee ... for thou has been a shelter ...”** 1. *How* would he pray? “I will *cry* unto thee”. 2. *Where* would he pray? “From the ends of the earth.” 3. *When* would he pray? “When my heart is overwhelmed.” 4. *For what* would he pray? “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” 5. *Whence* does he derive his encouragement to pray? “For thou *hast been* a shelter for me ...”

*William Jay*

**Verse 2. “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”** Like a man shipwrecked at sea, David sees the rock of his refuge rising out of the stormy waters and pleads with the Lord that he might be taken and placed upon its safe summit. The Rock is Christ, and so often, the child of God, having found himself floundering in a storm where his own high notions have cast him, can only turn and look to that Rock that is “higher” than all his own notions and far above any of his own thoughts. At such a time he sees his utter dependence upon the sovereign will and purpose of His God in heaven; for although he may see Christ as the Rock of his refuge he has no creature-power to strike out for that Rock. So, the prayer: “*lead me,*” says David. He can’t go of himself: “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” Then God is glorified in our complete reliance upon Him. Not only must He give us that Rock of Refuge in Christ His Son, but He, by His Holy Spirit, must lead us to it in the midst of the storm. This is one of the blessings of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” to our hearts.

**Verse 4. “I will abide in thy tabernacle ...”** In Christ, this is the place where the priest had presented the sacrifice; where the law is laid up in the ark as fulfilled; where the light of the Spirit’s candlestick shines; where the manna abides; where the glory is above the mercy-seat; where no enemy can enter; where I commune with a Covenant God.

*Hints to the Village Preacher*

**Verse 5. “For thou, O God, hast heard my vows ...”** That prayer is a blank which has no vow in it. Is it a mercy thou prayest Him to give? If it is, then, thou wilt praise Him for it, and serve Him with it. It is a sin thou prayest against? Except thou jugglest with God, thou wilt vow against it as well as pray against it.

*William Gurnall*

**Verse 7. “He shall abide before God for ever ...”** Though this is true of David in a modified sense, we prefer to view the Lord Jesus as here intended as the lineal descendant of David, and the representative of His royal race. Jesus is enthroned before God to eternity; here is our safety, dignity, and delight. We reign in Him; in Him we are made to sit together in the heavenlies. David’s personal claim to sit

enthroned for ever is but a foreshadowing of the revealed privilege of all true believers.

*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

**Verse 8.** “So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever ...” They that are Godly are oppressed and vexed in the church or congregation for this reason: that when they are pressed, they should cry; and when they cry that they should be heard; and when they are heard that they should laud and praise God.

*Augustine*

“And so will I perpetually sing praise unto thy name;  
That having made my vows, I may each day perform the same”

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## *A Needle and Thread*

“You may take a piece of silk thread, and try to sew with it as long as you like, but you will do nothing with it alone. You want a sharp, piercing needle to go first, and that will draw the silken thread after it. So, the needle of the Law prepares the way for the thread of the gospel.

Robert Flockhart  
*Street Preacher, Edinburgh*

## **A Week of Daily Bread**

**Monday:** Have you seen Christ, who is the Truth? Has He been revealed to you, not by flesh and blood, but by the Spirit of our God? Then you know how true it is that in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” – that He is the “Alpha and Omega,” the beginning and ending of all knowledge. But if you have not seen Christ, then you know nothing yet as you ought to know, all your knowledge is like a bridge without a keystone – like a system without a sun. What good will it do you in hell that you knew all the sciences

of the world, and all the events of history, and all the busy politics of your little day? (Robert Murray McCheyne.)

**Tuesday:** “Come, and see the victories of the cross,” says old Matthew Henry, “Christ’s wounds are thy healings, His agonies thy repose, His conflicts thy conquests, His groans thy songs, His pains thine ease, His shame thy glory, His death thy life, His sufferings, thy salvation.” “Believers! Go on!” exhorts old John Mason, “your last step will be on the head of the old serpent. Crush it, and spring from the crushing into glory.”

**Wednesday:** Afflictions are God’s most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our heavenly rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right and left, we should hardly keep the way of heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready we are to find it and turn out of the way. When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other affliction or trial reduce us? Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters; and, with David, may say, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.” Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful hope! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted! (Richard Baxter.)

**Thursday:** Free grace is the foundation of all spiritual and eternal mercies. Free grace is the solid bottom of all Christian comforts in this world. Were we to measure the love of God to us by *our* fruitfulness, or holiness, or humbleness, or heavenly-mindedness, or gracious thoughts towards Him how would our hope and our confidence every hour – yea, every moment in every hour – be staggered, if not completely vanquished! But all is of grace, of free grace, that the promise might be sure, and that our salvation might be safe. (Thomas Brooks.)

**Friday:** Where but in Christ can I find strength? The journey I have to take, the race I have to run, the warfare I have to accomplish, the duties I have to perform, the trials I have to bear. All these are not only above my *natural* powers, but even above the grace I possess,

without fresh and constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But He cries, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Surely, therefore, shall one say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” (William Jay.)

**Saturday:** No love like Christ’s love! Yea, His love to us transcends His love to all other things. He loved us more than angels, for He would not put on their nature. He loved us more than heaven, for He left heaven to come and save us. He loved us more than riches and honour, for He chose poverty, and became of no reputation, to redeem us. He loved us more than the comforts of life, for He parted with these, and became a man of sorrows for our sake. He loved us more than His blood, for He willingly parted with that for us. He loved us more than His soul and body, for He gave both of these to be an offering for our sins. It is “The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” (John Willison.)

**The Lord’s Day:** Attend diligently on the ordinances; yet beware of putting the ordinances in God’s place. How could the means of grace and ministers help thy soul, except the Lord should help? Christ Himself keeps the key of His wine-cellar. His ministering servants cannot so much as make you drink when you come to His house; and, therefore, poor soul, stop not short of Christ. Press through all the crowd of ordinances, and ask to see Jesus, to speak to Jesus, to touch Jesus. So will virtue come out from Him to you. (William Gurnall.)

“Ye vain engrossing thoughts away!  
The Lord demands our hearts this day;  
From earthly trifles bids us fly,  
And seek the glories of the sky:  
We come, O Lord, at Thy decree,  
To yield our willing hearts to Thee.”

# Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

Many years ago, there lived in London a Countess whose husband had died, but who had a little five-year old boy called Charles. The lady was a Christian, and she longed for Charles to love Jesus, too. She spoke to him, and prayed with him often; and told him about Jesus. But Charles was very disobedient and cheeky, and whenever the Bible was being read, or prayers being said, he would fidget and try to think of other things. His mummy persevered on, teaching him this prayer – ‘Lord, convert me – change my heart – teach me to love Thee, and to love my brethren as Jesus Christ loved us, Amen.’ But she was most upset by his bad behaviour.

One day, as she was sitting in tears, thinking of Charles, a servant came into the room, and told her that the other servants had been hunting for Charles for well over an hour, but couldn’t find him. All that day and the next, they hunted, and also advertised in the newspapers. A reward was offered, too, but Charles seemed to have disappeared off the face of the earth.

How sad his mother was, as she tried to remember, even one time in his life when little Charles had uttered from his heart any of the prayers she had taught him. But all she could remember was his disobedient ways.

One day, three years later, she returned back home from the country unexpectedly to find the servants busy spring-cleaning the house. As she passed through the hallway, she noticed a little chimney sweep leaning against the wall. In those days, little boys were used as chimney-sweeps, and they had to climb right up into the chimneys to clean them.

This little boy was crying. “What is the matter, child?” said the Countess. “I am crying,” said the boy, “Because my master will beat me again; not a day passes but he beats me for something or other.” “Well,” said the Countess, “I will speak to him.” “Oh no,” said the boy, “that will just make things worse for me. I complain to nobody, but in the evening, I speak to God. I ask Him to take me back to my mother.” “Do you know where she lives?” said the Countess. “No,” he cried. But, as he gave a description of all he could remember about his mother and his home, the Countess began to cry, too. She began to hope; but she must be sure, and so, continued to ask some more questions.

“And has the Lord never answered you? My child.” “Not yet, madame, but He will hear me one day I am sure, because He says so in His Word. I have asked God to make me better, and I think I am not so bad. I read a little in my New Testament that a good man gave me, and I pray every day this prayer my mother taught me: ‘Lord, convert me – change my heart – teach me to love Thee, and to love my brethren as Jesus Christ loved us, Amen.’” “My child, my child,” cried the Countess, putting her arms around him, “you are my son Charles, for that is the prayer I taught him before he was lost.” The little boy said, “That is the name my mother called me!” Just then the master-sweep came along, and was able to explain to the Countess when asked, that he had been given the little boy to look after by an old man some years before. As it turned out, this old man had in fact, kidnapped Charles, hoping to make some money by hiring him out as a chimney sweep. The old man had died, and the master-sweep was left with Charles.

How happy the Countess and Charles were. How thankful they were to God. And to show their thankfulness to God, they began to show great kindness to the unfortunate little boys who were forced to become chimney-sweeps in the great city of London. Each year, on the date when Charles and his mother were reunited, they had a special party for lots of the chimney-sweep boys. And on this occasion they used to love to tell of how God had answered their

prayers, and had not only brought them together again, but had – above all things – made Charles a true believing Christian who loved his name.

Sincerely,  
Mrs Seaton

## Respect of Persons



The great William Gadsby (shown in the picture) had in his congregation at Manchester two young men who were the sons of a wealthy member. “What a wonderful thing it would be,” thought Gadsby, “if the Lord would save them and bring them into the church.”

Week after week, he weighed his sermons and preached with an eye to the influencing of the two young gentlemen, but to no effect.

One day the great preacher was called to visit the home of a poor cripple boy who immediately began to tell how he had been blessed and saved under the gospel as delivered in the church at Manchester. “But, I have never seen you in my life,” said William Gadsby to him. “No,” replied the boy, “but I have often heard you preach. I was too ashamed to come into your chapel, but when the service started I used to hide in the gallery stairs.” As he began to relate to Gadsby how the Lord had dealt with his soul in conviction and salvation, the venerable old man was amazed, for they were the very points that he had thought to win his two young wealthy hearers with. “Lord,” he said, “Thou hast been at work on the gallery stairs with this poor cripple, while my thoughts have been among the gentlemen in the baize-covered seats.”