

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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The Necessity of Quietness (The Pastor's Letter – Sept. 1975)

Dear Friends,

Just outside the town of Dunoon on the Firth of Clyde is a little spot that we often visit when on holiday there. It's one of those places where, after a short walk along a well-kept path, you suddenly find yourself in a hollow surrounded by hills, and the words of the psalmist so readily springs to your mind: "As the hills are about Jerusalem, so is the arm of the Lord about them that fear him." It can be very quiet there, and seldom fails to impress the heart with the truth of the necessity of some measure of "quietness" in the life of the believer.

We live in an age of noise. The world never seems to be happy unless every waking moment is filled with the din of T.V., or radio, or the general chatter and clatter of idle communication. The Church too, has somewhat relegated the place of quietness to a dim and distant past generation, and there appears to be little exhortation or desire to meditate, or muse, or think very deeply on the things of our God. We live in an age of "racket" evangelism, where religious beat-groups grind out their worldly music, pounding the senses (in exactly the same way as their worldly counterparts do) until the extraction of a "decision" becomes a simple matter of technique. Gone are the days when the unbeliever was left in quietness before his God with those *religious impressions* gained through the ministry of God's word in the gospel; left with his impressions on things eternal, so that they might, by God's Holy Spirit, mature in his heart and mind into the seeking and finding of life eternal in Jesus Christ. The plan now seems to be to pummel, and then, rush the "conditioned" listener into a profession and vague acceptance of a vague salvation formula. How different is the whole drift of the Word of God and the history of the gospel in an age earlier than our own.

Remember that word with regards to Mary the mother of our Lord, when the shepherds at the manger began to make their revelations known all around: "But Mary kept all these things," it

says, "and pondered them in her heart." Joseph, too, set aside time to meditate on the whole scope of what lay before him, for, "As he thought on these things," it says, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him." There is, surely, a sanctity in silence where, under the word of the Lord, we may come very near to the mind of the Lord for our lives. But like so much else, the spirit of the world is "too much with us." Perhaps the old Highlander had a good word on the subject, when he related how he spent much of his spare time, "Sometimes I sit and think," he said, "and other times I think and sit."

You remember how it was when "all Judea," as it says, went out into the wilderness to hear John the Baptist preaching? As they watched John's actions and listened to his preaching, we are told that they "mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not." It's a picturesque phrase: they "mulled" it over – like Mary, they "pondered" the things that their eyes were seeing and ears were hearing. The Psalmist, too, knew all about the art of musing in his own day; "I muse on the works of thy hands," he told the Lord in one psalm, and in the only other psalm in which it occurs it offers us a wealth of advice for these days in which we live. "My heart was hot within me," says David in the 39th psalm; "while I was musing, the fire burned ..." David started off there with a wrong kind of musing – a human musing without the influence of the great truths of God. He was perplexed as he saw the prosperity of the wicked in the land of the living; and he resented their progress at a time in his life when he himself seemed to be downcast. His heart was "hot within him," as he tells us there; his old carnal desires and ambitions were getting more and more kindled, and the more he mused, the hotter the oven burned – "While I was musing, the fire burned." Ah, but then his musing moved from the superficial to the spiritual, and the outcome was a very different thing from the commencement – "**Then** spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end." Superficial musing can be a dangerous thing, for it amounts to little more than a carnal assessment of a given situation. So, the believing child of God must learn to cultivate the art in its right form, and muse and ponder on until it takes us to God and enables us to see the true "end" of all things.

Take old John Bunyan; he knew all about musing. When he was under the conviction of sin by God's Holy Spirit, how he mused then. "At another time," he writes in his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, "I sat by the fire in my house, and was musing on my great wretchedness ..." And how we could do with gospel preaching that would make the unconverted muse on their great wretchedness. And then, when Bunyan came out of his wretched state, the whole of his Christian life became one long muse, for, as he says himself, "the whole of the Bible is one long muse." "I mused, I mused, I mused," he says.

As you may know, when you place the letter "A" in front of a word it can act as a negative, I wonder, have we so little "musement" in our churches today, because we have so much "A-musement"? I wonder!

Yours,
W.J. Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 70)



Title. "To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David." So far the title corresponds with Psalm 40, of which this psalm is a copy with variations. David appears to have written the full-length psalm, and also to have made this excerpt from it, and altered it to suit the occasion. It is the second psalm which is a repetition of another, the former being psalm 53, which was the rehearsal of psalm 14. As we have the words of this psalm twice in the letter, let them be doubly with us in spirit. It is most meet that we should day by day cry to God for deliverance and help.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. "Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord." The cry of help is never far away from the heart and lips of the believer in Christ, but neither is it far away from the ear of the only One who can be our true Helper; the history of God's people in all generations bears this out. Hansard Knollys was one of those persecuted saints of God who had fled to America during the persecutions of the 17th century, but who later returned to this country in the cause of the gospel. Although with nothing by way of earthly possessions, he placed himself and his family on that promise of God, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and set forth from his lodgings to find some means of sustenance for them. He had only gone a few paces when he was met by a Christian woman who informed him that a home and means of support had been provided for him by some believers who wished him to minister God's gospel to their souls. The conclusion of Knollys and his family was of the most simple, yet, of the most profound kind: "Let us rely upon Him whilst we live," they declared, "and trust Him in all straits."

Verse 3. "Let them be turned back, for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha." The enemies of David delighted in his troubles, and this "Aha, aha" seems to have summed up their delight. All the people of God will know the same spirit against them to one degree or another, but, as James Frame reminds us, only in Christ Himself are the words of malice most realised; - "O miracle of mercy!" he says, "He who deserved the hallelujahs of an intelligent universe, and the special hosannahs of all the children of men, had first to anticipate, and then to endure from the mouths of the very rebels whom He came to bless and to save, the malicious tauntings of 'Aha, aha.'"

Verse 4. "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee; and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified." All men are "lovers" as well as "seekers", and what they love determines what they seek. Some love money more than God's salvation; some love business and bustle more than God's salvation and have sought it out. They love it for its own sake; they love it for the sake of Him who procured it by His obedience unto death; they love it for the sake of that Holy Spirit who moved them to seek it and

accept it in the first place; and they love it for the sake of their own souls, for, without it, they would be the most miserable wretches and outcasts in the universe.

From James Frame

Verse 5. "But I am poor and needy ..." This is the same plea as in the preceding psalm, at verse 29. It seems to be a favourite argument with tried saints. Evidently, our poverty is our wealth, even as our weakness is our strength. May we learn well this riddle.

C.H. S.

Whole Psalm. From the "First Petition," learn – though death, or danger of it, were never so near, God can come quickly and prevent it; and prayer is a swift messenger, which in the twinkling of an eye can go and return with an answer from heaven ... "O Lord, make haste to deliver me" From the "Second Petition," learn – The more that the enemies of God's people promise themselves certainty in the destruction of the saints, when God disappoints them they are all the more confounded and ashamed "Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul." From the "Third Petition," learn – Whatsoever be our own hard condition at any time, nevertheless, we should seek the welfare and prosperity of the rest of God's children "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee". From the "Fourth Petition," learn – Although we be not in that condition that we would wish all the Godly were in, yet, let us lay out our own condition before our gracious God ... "But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God ... make no tarrying."

David Dickson

WHAT IS YOUR HOPE?

Reader, what is your hope about your soul? Have you any, or have you none? Can you tell in what way you expect to be accounted righteous before God?

Depend upon it, these are very serious questions. You and I are dying men. After death comes the judgment. What is your hope of acquittal

in that awful day? What are we going to plead on our behalf before God?

Shall we say that we have done our duty to God? Shall we say that we have done our duty to our neighbour? Shall we bring forward our prayers, our regularity, our morality, our church going, our amendments? Shall we ask to be accepted by God for any of these things.

Which of these things will stand God's eye? Which of them will actually justify you and me? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment, and land us safe in glory?

Absolutely none! Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly. We cannot answer God. Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict. We are guilty – all deserve hell, all ought to die. How then can we come before God?

We must come in the Name of Jesus, standing on no other ground, pleading no other plea than this – "Christ died on the cross for the ungodly, and I trust in Him."

Oh, believe me, Christ must be all the hope of everyone who would be justified and saved. You must be content to go to heaven as a beggar – saved by free Grace, - simply as a believer in Jesus – ***or you will never be saved at all.***

(by Bishop J. C. Ryle)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast."

Spurgeon's Eccentric Preachers

Part 4 – Who Have Been Called Eccentric?

I would fain hope that some untruthful representations of good men are the accidental results of mis-reports. In these days when reporters must furnish brief accounts of public speeches, it is almost impossible for them to do the speakers justice, for in their hurry they near inaccurately, and in their brevity they give but a partial report. Now, the omission of a single sentence may make a speaker appear very absurd and eccentric. Of this we have a notable instance in the case of our beloved friend Mr. C. A. Davis of Bradford. His is a sweet, poetical, well-balanced mind; and yet, one would not think so from the newspaper report of a late speech at our College meeting. He is reported to have said of us, "May every hair of your head be a wax candle to light you into glory, and may you be in heaven ten minutes before the devil knows you're dead." Assuredly this looks very outrageous as it stands; but let me personally vouch for its connection. Our friend said that he wished that he was able to express his love for us, and his hearty desires for us, and that he envied the enthusiastic ingenuity of a poor Irish woman who in thanking her benefactor exclaimed, "May ... etc." Now, the reporter in this case was a friend to us all, but probably the pressures of the printing office knocked out the previous sentences, and there stood the Catholic benediction in all its exuberance.

Do you not think it very hard that some of us can never utter a playful sentence without being criticized? Often would I speak openly to my dear friends and unbosom myself as a man might in the midst of his family, but -

"A chiel's amang ye takin' notes,
And faith he'll prent it."

The injustice of the matter is that what a man does but once in a playful moment – and what poor slave among us does not sometimes

play? - is bandied around as if it were a fair specimen of his whole life. A man in a walk chases a rare butterfly, and straightway is regarded as a mere boy who wastes his time in catching flies. For my own part, I have so long lived under a glass case, that, like the bees that I have seen at the Crystal Palace, I go on with my work and try to be indifferent to spectators. Still there have been eccentric men, and names occur to us with which the epithet is *fitly* connected. But I shall almost entirely confine myself to good men and true, who have really edified the church of God and led sinners to repentance.

To begin at the Reformation period, I should single out first and foremost old Hugh Latimer. The mitre upon his head did not quench either his zeal nor his wit. Is there any reformer whose name strikes with such a homely sound upon the English ear as that of Latimer? We admire Cranmer and Ridley and Hooper, and the rest of them, but we love Latimer. There is something so genuine, and as we proudly say, so thoroughly English about that honest servant of God, that whether he kisses the stake in death or rebukes kings in his life, our hearts go out towards him. Yet he was not only homely, but at times odd and quaint in his speech that for a bishop he must be regarded as very eccentric. Did he not talk of that woman who could by no means get to sleep until she begged her friends to take her to the parish church, where she had so often slept the sermon through!

Taking a great leap and coming down to modern times, we note the great religious revival under Whitefield and Wesley, and we ask – who is the eccentric man here? The answer is that several might be so named; but among them all the chief would be John Berridge of Everton. What a lump of quaintness that man was – "Odd things break forth from me," he said, "like croakings from a raven." Yet who thinks of him as the present without admiration? His portrait forces you to smile and you cannot read his letters without laughing; but what a power was upon him to stir the souls of men and lead them to the Saviour's feet. Once, he was admonished for asking in his prayer at Tottenham Court Road that the Lord would give his people no stale bread, but that which was baked in the oven that day. He was informed by his admonisher that it was high time he had pulled off his

fool's cap (for so the petition about the fresh bread had been interpreted.) Berridge's answer draws forth my sympathy, "A fool's cap is not so readily put off as a *night* cap," he replied, "one cleaves to the head, and the other to the heart." However, the effect which the sight of Berridge produced upon the very sober mind of Andrew Fuller is well worth mentioning. He says, "I greatly admired that divine savour, which all along mingled itself with Mr. Berridge's jocularities, and sufficiently chastened it. His conversation tended to produce a frequent but guileless smile, accompanied with a tear of pleasure. His love to Christ appears to be intense. His visit left a strong and lasting impression on my heart of the beauty of holiness, of holiness almost matured."

Rowland Hill, whom Berridge calls "Dear Rowley", was hard at work for his Master when the old vicar was going off the stage; and well did he carry out the old man's advice, - "Study not to be a fine preacher; Jerichos are blown down with rams' horns. Look simply unto Jesus for preaching food, and what is needed will be given, and what is given will be blest, whether it be a barley or a wheaten loaf, or a crust or a crumb. Your mouth will be a flowing stream, or a fountain sealed, according as your heart is."

With Rowland Hill we naturally associate Matthew Wilks, who kept the Tabernacle full while Mr. Hill crowded Surrey Chapel. Of both of these we hope to speak more fully further on. America at the time of her first formation produced "back-woods" preachers of a rare eccentric order, such as Jacob Gruber, William Hibbard, James Oxley, Peter Cartwright, and others of a brave fraternity of men who laboured with the axe in their hands and the gospel on their ready tongues. Think of going to a charge where the people write. "Be sure and send us a good swimmer, for he will have to cross no end of rivers". "George," said Bishop Asbury to George Roberts, "Where are your clothes?" "Bishop, they are on my back" This man carried needle and thread in case of accident to his one set of garments.

To say the least it is remarkable that eccentricity and usefulness seem to so often go together. These wicked eccentric people, who are

frequently condemned, have nevertheless, it turns out, been among the most useful men of their times.

*Hugh Latimer
And Friar Ten
Commandments*

One of Latimer's "homely" illustrations, of which Spurgeon speaks, concerns a certain preacher of the Order of Gray Friars. He only ever preached one sermon – on the Ten Commandments – and so, became known as Friar John Ten Commandments. His servant complained bitterly of this state of affairs, and urged him to preach on some other subject. "Belike, then," said the Friar, "thou knowest the ten commandments well, seeing thou has heard them so many a time." "Yea," said the servant, "I warrant you." But, when asked to list them he repeated the seven deadly sins instead of the ten commandments. "And so there are many at this time," pronounced Latimer, "Which be weary of the old gospel. They would fain hear some new thing, but are no more skilful in the old than this servant was in the Commandments."

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

"Grandmother," said an Italian boy, "I'm going to my friend Joseph's birthday party, and I shall be expected to take a nice present. What can I take? I have no money to spend." Take this roll of butter," said his grandmother. "Butter! Butter for a birthday present!" gasped the boy. "All the boys will laugh; It will be so different from a drum, or a box of soldiers, or anything!"

However his grandmother could think of nothing else, and Antonio decided to take the butter. But he did not intend to give it as it was. His father was a stone-cutter and the boy had learned how to

carve flowers and leaves, animals' heads and other things in his father's workshop. Antonio carefully cut the butter into the shape of a magnificent lion. He placed it carefully in a dish and covered it, got cleaned and ready and set off a little early for the party.

On arriving at the door he explained to Joseph's mother what he had done, and asked if he might place his present on the "birthday table" as a surprise. When everybody had arrived, and were seated at the table, Joseph's father lifted the lid of the dish, and, Oh, what gasps from everyone when they saw the great "butter lion."

It was a marvellous success, and how happy poor Antonio was. But better was still to come. Joseph's father was a very wealthy man who offered to pay for Antonio's education. In later years, the maker of the butter lion became a famous sculptor. His name was Antonio Canova, and he died in 1822.

You see, boys and girls, how a humble boy did what he could with what he had to make his friend happy, and received a great reward which he did not expect.

In th bible we read of many people who did what *they* could with what *they* had, not just for their friends, but for the glory of God. In another letter I will tell you about one such person: but in the meantime, I'm sure you know of these: -

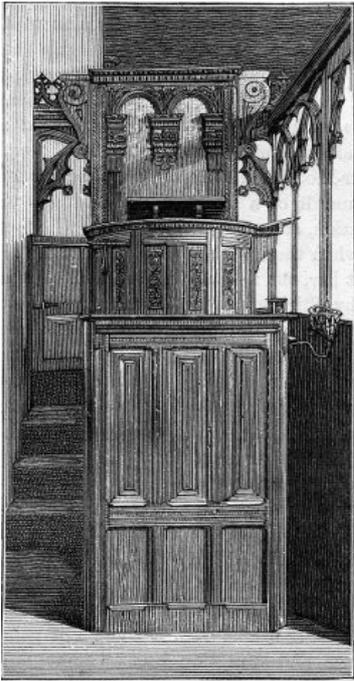
Shamgar had an ox-goad, David had a sling;
Dorcas had a needle, Rahab had some string;
Samson had a jaw-bone, Aaron had a rod;
Mary had some ointment, But they all were used for God.

Love,
Mrs Seaton

The Preaching Place

"Apart from *the preaching place*, madame, I think few have occasion to be offended at me; but there madame, I am not master of myself, but must obey Him who commands me to speak plainly and to flatter no flesh upon the face of the earth."

John Knox before the Queen.



"That is the best pulpit, whatever it be made of, that holds the most faithful minister."

Dr. Cumming

"Much reading and thinking may make a popular preacher; but much secret prayer must make a powerful preacher."

John Berridge.

"The pulpit belongs to the 'congregation' rather than to the 'schools'; it addresses itself to the indiscriminate many, rather than to select few. Its business is not to solve problems, but to stir and quicken souls; and it

does so, not by the development of a philosophy, but the delivery of a message. What it was in the days of Paul, such is it essentially still – the proclaiming of certain great facts concerning human sin and the divine remedy. These require not so much to be proved as to be manifested; and when so manifested, are themselves their own witness. So its speech and its preaching are not with excellency of speech or man's wisdom, but by manifestation of the truth commending itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

J. D. Burns

"It is shocking to fall into hell from under the pulpit; but how much more so from out of the pulpit!"

William Gurnall

"If the church be called a flock, the minister is the pastor to 'seek that which is lost – to strengthen the diseased – to heal the sick – to bring again that which was driven away;' in a word, to shepherd the flock in all the exercises of tenderness, consideration and care, that belong to this endearing title. If the family of Christ be an household, the minister is 'the faithful and wise steward,' who dispenses the provision of the house according to the necessities of its several members. If the church of God be a city, he is the watchman to wake and warn slumberers of their peril. If it be a husbandry, he is the labourer, to plant and water the soil – to cleanse the earth – to watch the growth of the plant – and be instrumental in bringing forth the harvest. If it be a building, he is the master builder, to build upon the 'sure foundation' lively stones – a spiritual house – 'growing into an holy temple of the Lord, builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.' If there be a treaty of peace to be negotiated between the majesty of heaven and a world of rebels, he is the ambassador, entrusted with the 'ministry of reconciliation,' and praying them in Christ's stead – 'Be ye reconciled to God.'"

Charles Bridges

"With all my discouragements and sinful despondency; in my better moments, I can think of no work worth doing compared with this. Had I a thousand lives, I would willingly spend them in it: and had I as many sons, I should gladly devote them to it."

Thomas Scott

"There are three things required to make a minister: - prayer, meditation, and temptation."

Martin Luther

"None but He who made the world can make a minister of the gospel."

John Newton