

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2002. (A Work in Progress)

Main Task and Duty of the Church

(The Pastor's Letter 1977)

Dear Friends,

If we were to be asked what the main task and duty of the churches of Christ is today, we would have little hesitation in replying – setting their hearts and minds to an endeavour to return to the Word of God. Just a little examination of the general situation today will show that the Word of God is not really central or its directives final in the thinking and conduct of a vast number of bodies that would call themselves evangelical or fundamental churches. The endeavour involved, of course, is one that entails much determined effort, and, as in so many other areas of our church life, it is one that can only be approached in any church under the principle of “striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

On the part of those who minister God's word from week to week there lies a great deal of the responsibility involved. The aim of every pastor of every flock should be to preach the whole counsel of God set out in the Word of God. God has revealed His truth in a progressive manner throughout the whole of the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, and this He has done by containing His word within the confines of individual “books” of scripture written by individual men inspired of God. Therefore the pastor ought to give attention to this order in its twofold aspect – consistently preaching through various book of the Bible in their totality and in their overall connection with all of God's revealed truth for us. This he ought to endeavour to do, not aridly or dryly, but in sermons aimed at the heart as well as instructing the mind, remembering that the very purpose in the gathering of the saints is the worship of the God who has made them and redeemed them.

As far as the congregation is concerned, the discipline and responsibility involved is no lesser, on their part, than that relating to the preacher. People seem to love a “simple text” of scripture that they can carry away and “dip into” during the days of the ensuing week. This may appear to be alright in itself, but we must remember that God didn't give to us a series of isolated sayings, but whole bodies of truths that “the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” To endeavour, then, to “trace out” these principles of conduct of the word of God for our daily living and thinking can be quite alien to our natural bent and calls for some determined effort on the part of all hearers of the word of eternal life. For this reason there can be a great attraction to that which affords a “good feeling” and leaves people enveloped in a “sound” rather than having told them plainly - “This is the way, walk ye in it.”

That, of course, might bring us to the greatest area of responsibility and endeavour of all. To merely “preach” and teach the whole word of God – albeit, it is in truth that whole word – and to merely “hear” that word – albeit consistently and regularly from week-to-week – is to simply indulge in an exercise of mutual interest and to come nowhere near having found that Word of God for our churches again. Oh no; what follows on from, and stems out of, this preaching and hearing which is desired is the simple “doing” of that word, for we are called to be not only hearers, but doers also. But this, needless to say, is very often the hardest part of all. From its obligation some simply opt out; this they may do either by attending on a ministry of minimal exhortation, or by refusing to attach themselves to the full obligations to which they may be exhorted under a ministry endeavouring to proclaim what the whole word of God says for our souls. But, for those who embrace the duty, although there is much discipline of heart and mind very often involved, there is also not a more rewarding course to take than to be a “doer” as well as a hearer of the words of everlasting life.

The whole word of God speaks to us as “whole” beings. It tells us of sin, righteousness, judgement: it speaks of elders and deacons – of widows and younger women; it sets out positions of the older

Christians and the younger within the churches of Christ – it tells us all we have to know and ought to know about those churches. It speaks of evangelism and worship - of the conducting of ourselves within the house of God, which is the pillar and ground of truth; it deals with humility, and pride, and love, and husbands and wives – with the conduct of our homes and our attitudes towards our children. It displays the glories of creation, and the malice of the devil, and the victories of the cross, and the heaven that is to be gained and the hell to be shunned. And, of course, it envelopes it all in the gracious and glorious person of our Lord Jesus Christ around whom all these other things revolve, and for whose glory the performance of all the Bible's words is to be sought; - “God ... manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

The spirit of the Ethiopian eunuch might be one that we could all desire in our churches today; “How can I understand, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.” What a wholesome picture – preacher and hearer, heaven-bent on one glorious mission, to see “what the Lord our God shall say.” Let any church engage herself in this task, and she may truly stand, “none daring to make her afraid,” for the Bible says, “Whosoever believeth shall not be confounded.” **But** – believing comes by hearing the word of God – and then, the profession of believing the word of God is verified in the doing of the Word of God. Therefore, we are “hearing” and “doing” the word, we are “returning to” the word. May we engage ourselves in that task in our day to the praise of Him of whom all the scriptures speak.

Yours sincerely,
W.J. Seaton.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

Do you know what a parable is? If not, perhaps this well-known explanation might help you: A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus taught many lessons in parables, and here is one of those parables that Jesus told when He lived on earth.

A certain man had two sons, Jesus told the people. One day the man went to his older son and said, “Son, go and work in my vineyard today”. He immediately replied, “I will not go.” But afterwards he was very sorry that he had answered his father like that, and he changed his mind, and went and did what his father had asked.

The father also went to the second son and said the same thing: “Son, go and work in my vineyard today.” He immediately replied “I go sir.” But this second son did not keep his word, and he did not go and work in his father's vineyard.

“Now,” asked Jesus, when He told that story to the people, “which of those two sons obeyed his father?” And the people immediately replied, “The first one.” And then, Jesus explained the *heavenly meaning* of that *earthly story*. “I tell you,” He said, “that sinners who are sorry for their sins will enter heaven before those who only pretend to be righteous.”

Now, boys and girls, I wonder what your answer would have been if Jesus had asked you that question? Would it have been the same as the people? I hope so; because that was the right answer. You see, Jesus does not want us to think that we can promise to obey

God and then, not carry out our promises. We are not to “pretend” with God, the way the second son pretended with his father, for God knows all that we think as well as all that we do.

There is a big word in the Bible for being truly sorry for our sins, and that word is *repentance*. We must believe that we have sinned against God and that we are sinners – that we have done wrong, just like the first son – and then, like him *repent* – be sorry for our sins, and ask Christ to be our Saviour and forgive us. He will, If we truly mean it.

Love,
Mrs Seaton.

The Devil ✂ and his Skilled Attacks

It is seldom that the devil ever only delivers one blow with his sword and no more. Having hit at this target with a “forearm” slice, he almost inevitably renders a second wound with the returning “backhand”. Indeed, it is sometimes very difficult to tell which of the two blows constitutes his primary intention and purpose.

This fact has been borne in upon us recently in our sermons in the early chapters of Genesis and in relation to the flood that God sent upon this earth in the days of Noah. There is little doubt that the devil is working much havoc in our day through the teaching of evolutionism – that “lie” that has exalted the creature above the Creator. In the spread of the lie, the Genesis flood has become one of the main targets and has come in for a tremendous volume of abuse and ridicule. The reason for that is not at all difficult to discover. There is not one single factor that would more explain the history of this earth (geologically etc.,) than the flood that God sent upon this earth in the days of Noah. However, the wisdom of this world cannot possibly allow such evidence, for to allow such a flood is to open the

door for admitting that there is a God and Creator of this world, and such a God who has revealed Himself on the pages of His word, the Bible. So, the flood must be discounted and derided, and so, the devil swings his sword in that very direction with every wheel and turn.

However, is that the whole of the story? When the devil hits at the flood in his advancement of the evolution lie is that his only purpose, or, indeed, is it his primary purpose? With regards to the latter part of the question, it is probably impossible to really say; with regards to the first part, we would have no hesitation in saying that the advancement of evolutionism in the devil's attacks on the flood is not his only purpose at all.

You see, the flood is not only one of the great “facts” of the Bible, it is also one of the great “figures” of the Bible, as well. There are great facts in the Bible which stand, more or less, only as great facts, and are never used at a later point in the Bible as great “figures” - as outstanding events illustrating yet more outstanding events to come. But the flood is not like that. And the flood in the days of Noah not only thunders through the early parts of Genesis as far as the fact of it is concerned, but it still rushes on in the pages of the New Testament, and is only seen as truly abating from off the face of the earth, as far as the figure of it is concerned, at that time when time shall be no more and when God will have spoken the last word with regards to the eternal fate of every soul that ever lived.

We need only remember the Lord's words, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be” The flood in the days of Noah is the great biblical figure for the judgment in the last and final day of the Lord. Might we not expect the devil to have the destruction of that in his mind's eye, then, as he attacks the flood in our day with regards to his lie of evolutionism also? Indeed, yes. And it is, surely, possible that his attacks on the flood via evolutionism are in themselves subservient to the great aim of destroying every vestige of the thought of coming judgment in the hearts and minds of men and women in our day.

You'll remember how the men and women of Peter's day eliminated the thought of the coming day of the Lord. In a word, they abolished the remembrance of the flood; that's what Peter is telling us. "For this they willingly are ignorant of – (they have calculatedly made themselves ignorant of) – that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:5)

God in His judgment destroyed the old world by a flood – an undeniable fact. But an undeniable figure of an undeniable fact also – the judgment of this present world which will surely occur. But of the fact of the flood men and women will love to be "willingly ignorant," for they must be willingly ignorant of the flood's abiding figure, for they will not receive the fact of which the flood is the abiding figure – the judgment to come.

Just one other point: as the devil strikes fiercely with forearm and backhand, he can also strike a measure of fear and trembling into those who witness his attacks. What we mean is this: as men and women today have come to regard the Genesis flood as unworthy of their 20th century intelligence and more suited to a bye-gone age and its thought-forms, we must be careful that, as Christians, we don't feel intimidated and begin to treat the message of "flee from the wrath to come" in the same way. It is, surely, significant that as the world has increased in its denouncement of the flood, the church has decreased in its pronouncement of the judgment. We must never forget that man always looks on himself as "modern" when compared to former generations. The men of Peter's day looked on themselves as tremendously modern, so much so, that they "scoffed" at the things that were written in the Bible, taking a good part of their stand from any acceptance of God's flood. But as their voices were loud in disclaiming, Peter's voice was loud in proclaiming. The Lord asks nothing more from His people than that. He asked nothing more from dear old Noah himself - "A preacher of righteousness in his

generation.” He asks nothing more from us. May we be prepared to render what He asks.

Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 78 (Continued)



Verse 40. “How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!” Times enough did they rebel: they were as constant in provocation as he was in patience. In our own case, who can count his errors? In what book could all our perverse rebellions be recorded? The wilderness was a place of manifest dependence, where the tribes of Israel were helpless without divine supplies; yet they wounded the hand which fed them while it was in the act of feeding them. Is there no likeness between them and us? We are in the desert where we need our God, let us not make it a wilderness of sin by grieving him.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 40. “How oft did they provoke him ...!” They provoked God at least ten times during the first two years of their journey through the wilderness:-

1. At the Red Sea (Exodus 14:11-12)
2. At the waters of Marah (Exodus 15:24)
3. In the wilderness of sin (Exodus 16:2)
4. When they kept the manna until the following day (Exodus 16:10)
5. When manna was collected on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:27)
6. In Rephidim where there was no water (Numbers 20:2,13)
7. At Horeb when a molten calf was made (Exodus 22:1)

8. At Taberah where God's fire fell (Numbers 11)
9. When they lusted for flesh (Numbers 11:4)
10. When they murmured against the spies (Numbers 14:1)

Daniel Cresswell

Verse 41. “Yea, they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” We may be guilty of limiting God -

(One) In prescribing to Him *certain methods and ways of action*. In this case we do not allow Him to be the Lord of His own favours, or to have the privilege of being his own director.

(Two) In binding Him down to *particular times and seasons* for working our deliverances. This is to rob Him of that which He hath “put in his own power,” and to arrogate the right of giving laws to our Sovereign Ruler.

Stephen Charnock

Verse 41. “Yea, they turned back” How easy it is for any professing child of God to “turn back” in heart, mind, tongue or action. So it was with the godly Archbishop Cranmer after he had made such a gallant stand with Latimer, Ridley and good John Bradford, and then, signed a retraction of his reformed beliefs in order to escape the martyr's fire. Yet, grace prevailed, and as he had “turned back” *in* the faith, so he was “turned back” *to* the faith, and died at the stake, holding the hand that had signed the retraction in the fire, and exclaiming, “That unworthy hand; that unworthy hand.”

Verse 42. “They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.” The day of the Passover was ever to be the cardinal day of remembrance in the life of the nation of Israel. This was their day of deliverance, and to this their minds and hearts were ever to turn in thankfulness. So, their children were to be taught it, and so the prophets ever called them back to think on it when they were in danger of following after false gods or lapsing into unholy practices or erroneous forms of worship. And as the shadow and picture was precious, how much more the substance; for the day

of the Cross is the day to which the hearts and minds of the true Israel – the church of the living God – is ever meant to be directed when “Christ our Passover” was “Sacrificed for us.” So, we have only one “remembrance feast” ordained by the Lord for His church - “This do in remembrance of me.” So, the preachers of the new Israel will call us ever back to one spot - “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you ... before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” The Lamb has been slain, the blood has been sprinkled, the devil has been robbed of his slaves, the way to the eternal Canaan lies before us, and the Lord will one day lead His church over the Jordan to her eternal rest. And now in her pilgrimage, and then in her rest, there is but one focal point and one theme for time and eternity - “Now unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood ... worthy the lamb that was slain ...”

“O I am by Beloved's and my Beloved's mine,
He brings a poor vile sinner into His house of wine;
I stand upon His merit, I know no other stand,
Not e-en where glory dwelleth in Immanuel's Land.”

Dear Mr. Bunyan called “Forgetful Green” - “The most dangerous place in all these parts.” When old Israel forgot the Passover she stood in the most dangerous place on earth, but when the New Israel forgets *her* Passover her feet have “well nigh slipped.”

Snippets:



Devilish Devices (from William Gurnall)

“In carrying out his tempting designs, Satan often chooses those, who by relationship or affection, have a deep interest in the person he would tempt.

Some will kiss the child for the sake of the nurse, or accept the present on account of the hand that offers it. Thus, Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam, and Delilah did more with Samson than all the Philistine armies. It is Job's wife that brings him the poison, “Curse God and die,” and it is Peter that Satan employs, a disciple, to tempt

Christ. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met with was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations, and Paul himself could not get out of this snare without a heartbreaking time - “What mean you to weep and to break mine heart, for I am ready not only to suffer, but to die at Jerusalem for the Lord Jesus?” (Acts 21:13)

Dying in faith? (John Willison)

“Would you be so happy as to *die in faith*? Take the following advice: Be careful to get faith beforehand; for death is the time to *use* faith, not to seek it.”

Hearers and Doers. (Bishop Hall)

“I remember our countryman, Bromeard, tells us of one, meeting when his neighbour coming out of the church, asked him 'What! Is the sermon done?' 'Done!' said the other, 'no: we could say it is ended, but it is not so readily done.' And surely, so it is with us: we have a good store of sermons said, but we have only a few that are done. Yet, one sermon done is worth a thousand only said and heard; for 'not the hearers of the law, but the doers of it are justified.' And 'if ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them.'”

Doctrinal Religion. (J. C. Ryle)

“Mark what I say. If you want to do good in these times, you must throw aside indecision, and take up a distinct, sharply-cut, doctrinal religion. If you believe little, those to whom you try to do good will believe nothing. The victories of Christianity, wherever they have been won, have been won by distinct doctrinal theology; by telling men roundly of Christ's vicarious death and sacrifice; by showing them Christ's substitution on the cross; and his precious blood; by teaching them justification by faith, and bidding them believe in a crucified Saviour; by preaching ruin by sin, redemption by Christ, regeneration by the Spirit; by lifting up the brazen serpent; by telling men to look and live – to believe, repent, and be converted. This – this is the only teaching which for centuries God has honoured with success, and it is honouring at the present day both at home and abroad.