

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)

The Pastor's Letter (November 1977)

“Gird up your Loins”

Dear Friends,

It is a good word that Peter gives us in the first chapter of his First Epistle, where he tells us, "Gird up the loins of your mind, (1st Peter 1:13). To the average reader of Peter's day, the reference would be quite straight-forward, and it would be apparent that he was alluding to the long, flowing, all-purpose robe that was the normal wear of the day and which hung casually on the body from neck to ankle. When the question of exertion arose, however, that long, flowing gown had to be dealt with, and this was accomplished by gathering up the lower parts of it and tucking them into the "girdle" that was worn around the waist as part of the normal dress also. Even the "Christian Soldier" that Paul refers to on more than one occasion in his writings was fitted out with a "girdle" - the "girdle of truth", as Paul calls it; for, of course, such a girdle was part of the Roman Legionnaire's equipment. It is, no doubt, that girdle that Paul has in mind when he tells Timothy, "No man that warreth *entangleth* himself with the affairs of this life." He gathered up his loose flowing robe as soon as he pitched himself into the battle, he "girt up his loins" for the task that was set before him. The same thing would apply to the labourer in the field, or the traveller on the road, or to anyone, in fact, with some essential and determined task at their disposal.

You get, what was probably, a lovely example of it in Peter's own life: when Mary brought word that the tomb in which Christ had been laid was now empty, and, we read in

John chapter 20, "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter ..." What a race of loving devotion that was! John outran Peter, of course, for the simple reason that he was a good few years younger" But, can't you see the two excited saints of the Lord, gathering up the loose ends of their garments, hitching up their robes, and setting off down that road as fast as their individual abilities would carry them!

Well, it's that kind of picture that Peter is using in his letter, and he is simply saying, gather up and deal with any of those trammels and impediments of the mind when it comes to this business of living your Christian life here below. You have a battle to fight, and a field to labour in, and a road to walk - approach the task in the way that you should and don't be tangled about with those things that would impede you with that job on hand. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober," etc.

Now, you will see that Peter begins that sentence with the word "Wherefore" - or, "Therefore," if you like. And although the idea of having our "loins girt" can have a good many applications throughout the word of God, Peter is most certainly here linking it to what has gone before in the first chapter of his letter. If you read those foregoing verses, you will find that the great theme of them is that "inheritance" that the Church of Jesus Christ will one day enter. He has begun his epistle by calling the church "elect strangers." So she is in all her members upon the face of this earth; wherever the believers are - albeit in the very land of their natural birth - they are "strangers" on the face of this globe. They are the "Diaspora" - the dispersed ones of Israel, away from the

promised land in olden times; that is the word that Peter uses. ***But***, they are on their way ***to*** the land of their inheritance in Jesus Christ their Lord, and so, Peter is telling us how to address ourselves to the journey that lies before us to that inheritance.

You remember how old Israel was to prepare itself for the road that lay between coming out of bondage in Egypt and into the possessions of Canaan? "And thus shall ye eat the passover with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand." The road ahead was going to be no picnic; they had to be prepared and ready for it. So, says Peter "Gird up the loins ***of your mind***." "Our Passover is sacrificed for us." Christ has performed "the exodus that he should accomplish at Jerusalem." there stretches out the inheritance, "incorruptible and undefiled" before us. But the journey has yet to be made - be it long or short - through the wilderness of this world to that "Land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign." And there is preparation to be made on the part of the new Israel - the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ - for that pilgrimage. So, says Peter, "Gird up the loins of ***your mind***;" settle your mind for the affairs of this journey.

Was it not the case that the bulk of old Israel never did what Peter exhorts the professing people of God in his letter to do? They performed a "physical" girding, but not a spiritual one. For when the road became hard, they longed again to be back among the flesh-pots of Egypt. "Therefore" - having given us something of a glimpse of the place that is prepared for us, he will then exhort us to be ever prepared for the journey to that place; "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The end

of the pilgrimage - in whatever way it comes for us - is the beholding of Jesus Christ our Saviour. If that is the case, then surely, we ought to feel as dear old Samuel Rutherford felt at the prospect,

"It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between."

May God give us the grace to view it like that by having the "loins of our mind girt."

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE



I'm sure most of you like things that are sweet: sweet biscuits, and sweet cakes, sweet drinks, and sweet food. Quite likely most of you like honey or syrup and are quite pleased when your mother sets a jar of honey or a tin of syrup on the table at tea-time. If the tin of syrup happens to be one that is made by a company called Tate & Lyle, then you might have noticed a very strange kind of "label" on the front, with some very strange words underneath. The label shows a dead lion lying on its side, and the words underneath say this, "Out of the strong came forth sweetness." Have you ever looked at that label, or have you ever wondered what it meant? Well, I'll tell you just in case you don't know.

The explanation is found in the Bible - in the book called The Book of Judges. The Judges were the men and women who ruled the nation of Israel before that nation had a king, and they very often did mighty deeds.

One of the most famous Judges was a man called Samson, and one day Samson was met by a fierce lion as he made a journey. That didn't bother Samson much, for he was so strong that the lion was soon lying dead at his feet. When he eventually came back from his journey, he passed the place where the lion was still lying dead, and as he passed by, he notices that some bees had made a nest inside the lion's body. Samson took the honey out of the nest and went on his way.

Soon Samson met some young men, and he decided to set them a riddle - offering them a prize if they got the right answer. Here was the riddle he set them: he said,

"Out of the eater came something to eat;
Out of the strong came something sweet."

You know what he meant, of course, boys and girls, don't you? He was speaking about that "honey" that he got out of the strong lion that had tried to eat him, and that is the story that is shown on the label of that tin of syrup on the table.

As I said at the beginning, the story is found in the Book of Judges, chapter 14. The book of Judges is a very sad book in some ways for it tells how often the children of Israel were faithless to God. I trust you will always endeavour to be faithful to God in your lives and obey His Holy Word.

Sincerely,
Mrs Seaton

Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 78 (Concluded)



Verses 43-51. "How he had wrought his signs in Egypt..."

Moses and Christ compared and contrasted:-

Moses wrought wonders destructive, ***Christ*** wonders preservative. ***Moses*** turned water into blood, ***Christ*** water into wine. ***Moses*** brought flies and frogs, locusts and caterpillars, destroying the fruits of the earth, ***Christ*** increased a little of these fruits - five loaves and a few fishes - by blessing them and feeding a multitude of men besides women and children. ***Moses*** smote both men and cattle with hail, and thunder and lightning, so that they died, ***Christ*** made them alive that were dead, and saved from death the diseased and sick. ***Moses*** was an instrument to bring all manner of wrath and even angels amongst them, ***Christ*** cast out devils and did all manner of good, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, limbs to the lame, cleansing to the leper. ***Moses*** slew their first-born, thus causing a horrible cry in all the land of Egypt, ***Christ*** saveth all the first-born - or rather by saving them, makes them so - for thus they are called as "the Church of the first-born."

John Mayer

Verse 50. "He made a way in his anger" Literally - He ***weighed*** a way in his anger. The implication is that God, in His severe punishing of the Egyptians, only did that which was in accordance with His righteousness in Judging sin. He held them in the scales of his justice - weighed them in the

balances - and they were found wanting. God's judgments are always righteous and beyond dispute of questioning.

From *A. R. Fausset*

Verse 52. "But made his own people go forth like sheep ..." The judgments of God are always well-earned, but the mercies which we receive are all according to the free grace of God. *So* - "It is not said that they went forth like sheep, but that he made them go forth like sheep. It is not a description of the character of the people, but a commendation of the providence and goodness of God, by which, after the manner of a good shepherd, He led forth His own people from Egypt."

From *Musculus*

Verse 57. "But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow." They were true to nothing but hereditary treachery; steadfast in nothing but a falsehood. They knew his truth and forgot it, his will and disobeyed it, his grace and perverted it. Reader, dost thou need a looking glass? See here is one that suits the present expositor well; does it not also reflect thine image? they "turned back." Turned over the old leaf, repeated the same offences, were false and faithless to their best promises, and started aside like an ill-made bow - "a deceitful bow" - which not only fails to send the arrow towards the mark, but springs back to the archer's hurt, and perhaps sends the shaft among his friends to their serious jeopardy. Israel boasted of the bow as the national weapon, and sang the song of the bow; hence a "deceitful bow" is made to be the type and symbol of their own unsteadfastness. God can make men's glory the very ensign of their shame.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 61. "And (God) delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand." The upshot of the "turning back in the day of battle," and the "turning aside like a deceitful bow," was that God removed the Ark - the symbol of "his strength" and "his glory" - from the midst of Israel into their enemy's hand. So, the cry went throughout the land that day - "Ichabod; for the glory has departed from Israel." God will only permit the flaunting of His mercies for a given time, and then can speedily remove the vestiges of His presence and place His glory elsewhere. So verses 67 and 68 tell us, "Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved." God indeed, will ever have His great glory set forth, and where one people will turn away from seeking this, He will soon raise up another. So, Matthew Henry gives us a word to ponder well in our hearts: "the moving of the ark is not the *removing* of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed. Nay, the rejection of Shiloh is but the election of Sion."

Verses 69-72. "And he built his sanctuary ... He chose David also his servant ... to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel his inheritance." And as the old Israel enjoyed "the sure mercies of David," let us be comforted in the assurance that "David's greater son" will lead and feed the flock of God until they come to the eternal pastures.

What Saith the Scriptures? -

- The Book of Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs, the first in the order of the Scriptures of the three works ascribed to Solomon, although not the first in order of production is supposed by the Jews to have been written after the song of Solomon and previous to Ecclesiastes.

As universal in application as the Psalms, the Book of Proverbs can be said to have as its background virtually as wide a stretch of time in the history of the Hebrews. Together with the "song" as a distinctive mode of early literary expression, there developed the "mashal" - a word usually translated "proverb," or sometimes, "parable." It is intended to denote a distinctive way of expressing some memorable, or weighty thought. There are many specimens of these "mashal" throughout the historical and prophetic books of the Bible. The book of Proverbs gathers in one book several groups or collections of these proverbs.

The use of the mashal or proverb was developed by the Jews as a medium of moral or religious instruction. The book of Proverbs, presenting a selection or collection of them, could be described as a guide to a happy and successful life. Just as the Law was ascribed to Moses and the Psalms to David, so were the Proverbs traditionally credited to Solomon. In 1st Kings 4 verse 32, we are told that Solomon spake 3000 proverbs, and again, in Ecclesiastes 12 verse 9, that he set in order many proverbs. Of this large number, the greater part must have perished, as those recorded in this book amount to only between four and five hundred.

Many commentators have hesitated to assign the entire authorship of these to Solomon, claiming that the range of experience and knowledge compassed by them exceeds what any one man could gather in a life-time. But this is to forget the especial gift which Solomon was endowed. However, there are close resemblances between some of the proverbs and passages - for example, in the Book of Job - that would indicate that he was not the original author in all cases, but rather that he adopted some sayings that were current in his time, adding to them others out of the treasuries of his own wisdom and the results of his own observations under the Lord.

The Book may be divided into five parts: The first part, containing chapter 1 to 9, is in the nature of a homily or volume of advice to his son to follow after wisdom; the second part, containing chapter 10 to 24, is occupied with single proverbs and moral and religious precepts; the third part, from chapters 25 to 29, contains additional proverbs collected in the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah. The fourth and fifth parts, containing "the words of Agur," in chapter 30 and "The words of Lemuel," in chapter 31, give no real clue to their authorship over and above those names.

The Book or Proverbs, although it seems to inculcate a purely moral teaching, is yet undoubtedly entitled to the high place which it holds in the inspired scriptures. The frequent quotations made from it in the New Testament, and the references to it by our Lord and the Apostles, show that it was so regarded in their day.

The Banner of Love.

*“He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love.”*



What a glorious sight those banners of war must have been as they hung from the rafters of the banqueting house of the King of Israel, as he sat down to eat with his young bride. How many great and glorious victories must have been inscribed upon those velvet flags of honour! But above the head of the young bride of the Song of Songs was stretched out, in her mind's eye, a far more precious banner than Israel could ever boast - and that was the banner of "Love" that Solomon had woven for her and had inscribed with his own undivided attention.

And what banner flies over the heads of the Lord's elect. And how many victories are woven into the fabric of the flag of our redemption? As soon as it was unfurled in the manger in Bethlehem "the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed," and Herod would "seek the young child to destroy him." The articles of war had been issued many hundreds of years before in the garden of Eden when "enmity" was declared between the seeds of the woman and the serpent, and it wasn't long until our Redeemer had entered into hand-to-hand combat with the prince of this world.

Three conflicts are especially emblazoned upon the Banner of the Lord. The *Battle of Gethsemane* is there; where Christ must needs enter into combat with the unflinching justice of His Father in heaven and take on salvation for man such as the Father had decreed. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from

me." But it wasn't possible; and Christ entered the fray - but gained the victor's crown. The *Battle of Gabbatha* is there also. How many unholy alliances were forged that day against the Prince of Life at that "place of the pavement?" Herod and Pilate making common cause; the Jews and the Romans linked together; the Pharisees and the Sadducees burying their differences for that day's work. Yet the victory was the Lord's. And the *Battle of Golgotha* shines brightly there, as well. How black it seemed when the battle commenced that day on the hill called Calvary. See how the Captain of our Salvation even wilted, it would seem, under the blows of Divine wrath. But the blood of His veins is only to dye the banner of our redemption a crimson hue, that the golden letters of the Father's love might be plain for all the children to read as it stretches itself out above them.

"Inscribed upon the Cross I see,
In shining letters - God is Love."

No wonder the Church of Solomon's Song says, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love," For love it is.