

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)

Discipleship – Its Cost.

(The Pastor's Letter March 1979)

Dear Friends,

I'm sure that most of us have particular passages in particular books that we have marked down for constant or future reference as the case might be. In his book, "Holiness" J. C. Ryle is constantly presenting us with issues that remain basic and fundamental to the Christian life, and must have application to the Lord's people in whatever age they find themselves.

In his chapter entitled, "The Cost," this is certainly the case and the four things involved in "the cost of discipleship" which the good bishop of another day lists ought to be as fresh and telling to our hearts and minds today as when they were first written.

In the first place, Bishop Ryle informs us of what he does not mean when he speaks about the "cost" of discipleship:-
"Let there be no mistake about my meaning," he says, "I am not examining what it costs to save a Christian's soul. I know well that it costs nothing less than the blood of the Son of God to provide an atonement, and to redeem man from hell. The price paid for our redemption was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. We are 'bought with a price.' 'Christ gave himself a ransom for all.' But all this is wide of the question. The point I want to consider is another one altogether. It is what a man must be ***ready to give up*** if he wishes to be saved."

Bishop Ryle also goes on to allow that "it costs little to be a mere outward Christian," and states that this is "cheap and easy work." But with regards to the true Christian pathway, a man ought to be in no doubt concerning the issue of "Counting the cost." So the list is presented:-

(1) For one thing, it will cost him *his self-righteousness*. He must cast away all pride and high thoughts, and conceit of his own goodness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace, and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another. He must really feel as well as say that he has "erred and gone astray like a lost sheep," that he has "left undone the things he ought to have done, and done the things he ought not to have done, and that there is no health in him." He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible-reading, church-going, and sacrament-receiving, and to trust in nothing but Jesus Christ.

Now, this sounds hard to some. I do not wonder. "Sir," said a Godly ploughman to James Hervey, "it is harder to deny proud self than sinful self, but it is absolutely necessary." Let us set down this item first and foremost in our account. To be a true Christian will cost a man his self-righteousness.

(2) For another thing, it will cost a man *his sins*. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice, which is wrong in God's sight. He must set his face against it; quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it, labour to keep it under, whatever the world around him might say or think. He must do this honestly and fairly. There must be no separate truce with any special sin which he loves. He must count all sins as his deadly enemies and hate *every* false way. Whether little or great, whether open or secret, all his sins must be thoroughly renounced. They may struggle hard with him every day, and sometimes get the mastery over him. But he must never give way to them. He must keep up a perpetual war with his sins. It is written, "Cast away from you all your transgressions" - "Break off thy sins and iniquities," - "Cease to do evil."

This also sounds hard. I do not wonder. Our sins are often as dear to us as our children; we love them, hug them, cleave to them, delight in them. To part with them is as hard as cutting off a right arm, or plucking out a right eye. But it must be done. Man and sin

must quarrel if man and God are to be friends. Let us set down that item next in our account. To be a Christian it will cost a man his sins.

(3) For another thing, it will cost a man his *love of ease*. He must take pains and trouble if he means to run a successful race to heaven. He must daily watch and stand on his guard, like a soldier on enemy ground. He must take heed to his behaviour every hour of the day, in every company and in every place - in public as well as in private - among strangers as well as at home. He must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his imagination, his motives, his conduct in every relation of life. He must be diligent about his prayers, his Bible-reading, his use of Sundays, with all their means of grace. In attending to these things, he may come far short of perfection; but there is none of them that he can safely neglect.

This also sounds hard. There is nothing we naturally dislike so much as "trouble" about our religion. We hate trouble. We secretly wish we could have a "vicarious" Christianity, and could be good by proxy, and have everything done for us. Anything that requires exertion and labour is entirely against the grain of our hearts. But the soul can have "no gains without pains." Let us set down that item third in our account. To be a Christian it will cost a man his love of ease.

(4) In the last place, it will cost a man the *favour of the world*. He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must not be surprised to find his opinions and practices in religion despised and held up to scorn. He must submit to be thought by many a fool, an enthusiast, and a fanatic - to have his words perverted and his actions misrepresented. In fact, he must not marvel if some call him mad.

I dare say this also sounds hard. We naturally dislike unjust dealing and false charges, and think it very hard to be accused without cause. We would not be flesh and blood if we did not wish to have the good opinion of all men. But there is no help for it. The cup which our Master drank must be drunk by his disciples. Let us set

down that item last in our account. To be a Christian will cost a man the favour of the world.

So, says Mr Ryle, "Such is the account of what it costs a man to be a Christian." And who can quarrel with what he says? Is it not an absolutely basic and never-changing account sheet? "I grant the list is a heavy one," he says, "but where is the item that could be removed? Bold indeed must that man be who would dare to say that we may keep our self-righteousness, our sins, our laziness, and our love of the world, and yet be saved! I grant it costs much to be a true Christian," he says.

But then, the dear old bishop tilts the balance, and causes every true heart to cry out with Bunyan's pilgrim - "Set down my name, sir!" "But," he says, "who in his sound senses can doubt that it is worth any cost to have the soul saved? When the ship is in danger of sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. When a limb is mortified, a man will submit to any severe operation, and even to amputation, to save life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing! A cheap Christianity without a cross will prove in the end a useless Christianity without a crown."

God give us all "ears to hear."

Sincerely,

W. J. Seaton

Quick Illustration from C. H. Spurgeon.

Putting off Till Tomorrow.

“Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. 'Two candles,' said he, for his drunkenness made him see double, 'I will blow out one.' But as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin! He has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then he half expects another in which to turn to God. So, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has and in the dark he will have to

lie down for ever. Haste thee, traveller, thou has but one sun, and after that sets, thou wilt never reach thy home. God help thee to make hast now.”

A Few Thoughts from John Newton



Satan will seldom come to a Christian with a gross temptation. A green log and a candle may be safely left together. But bring a few shavings, then some small sticks, and then larger, and you may soon bring the green log to ashes.

Many have puzzled themselves about the origin of evil. I observe that there is evil and that there is a way to escape it, and with this, I begin and end.

There are critical times of danger. After great service, honour, and consolation, we should stand upon our guard. Noah, Lot, Solomon and David, fell in these circumstances. Satan is a robber: a robber will not attack a man in going to the bank, but in returning with his pockets full of money.

One said that the great saints of the calendar were many of them poor sinners. Mrs Newton replied, they would have been poor saints, indeed, if they did not feel they were great sinners.

I have read of many wicked Popes, but the worst pope I ever met with is Pope Self.

The heir of a great estate, while a child, thinks more of a few shillings in his pocket than of his inheritance. So a Christian is often more elated by some feelings of the heart than by his title to glory.

I remember, in going to undertake the care of a congregation (in Warwick), I was reading as I walked in a green lane: "Fear not Paul, I have much people in this city." This gave me a great feeling at the

time, but I soon afterwards was disappointed in finding that Paul was not "John" (Newton) and that Corinth was not Warwick.

It is sure mercy that denies a particular request. A child walks in a garden in spring and sees cherries; he knows they are good fruits and therefore asks for them. "No, my boy," says the father, "they are not yet ripe; wait till the season."

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

There was once a great battle, and the king's army was under terrible pressure from the enemy. The general decided to send for reinforcements to help win the battle, so he chose out a young soldier whom he thought would be most suitable for the task. Off rode the soldier with the general's words ringing in his ears - "Ride on! ride on! don't lose a minute, or we are lost."

As he was galloping on, he noticed a change in the horse's gallop and he knew at once that a shoe was loose. He could hear the enemy in the distance coming after him. What should he do? There was a Smithy near at hand, and so, he decided to stop and have the hoof seen to. His heart was beating faster and faster as the blacksmith changed the shoe. The seconds seemed like hours, and minutes seemed like years. However, at last, it was done! Then leaping into his saddle, just as the enemy rode into sight, he galloped off like the wind and was able to do what he had set out to do - get help.

Now, boys and girls, I think there is a lesson for us in this little story. So often when difficulties or problems come our way, we just rush on, getting into a flap or muddle, and in the end no further forward and exhausted! Isn't that right? It's much more sensible to be calm, take stock of the situation, and then make a careful decision. This way, we can live ordered lives.

Now, when it comes to our *soul*, we must be twice as careful. Satan, the devil would want to keep us in confusion all the time; rushing through life, never having time to stop and think about God, or our sins, or the end. The Bible tells us many times to "consider" our ways. Jesus gave us a good example: how often He drew aside from the crowds, and in quietness, *He* prayed to God.

Let us remember these words from the Bible, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Love,
Mrs Seaton.

Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 85



Verse 1. "Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob." All true believers are the sons of Jacob and the seed of Abraham. The Church of these true Jacobins and Israelites is the "land" of the Lord, and the captivity here mentioned is bondage under sin. In this captivity, Satan is the Jailer, the flesh is our prison, ungodly lusts are the manacles, a bad conscience, the tormentor - all of them against us. But, Christ is Immanuel, God with us, and He turns away the captivity of Jacob in forgiving all our offences, and in covering all our sins."

Abraham Wright

Verse 4. "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease." This prayer for God to "turn" towards His people in favour comes on the back of no less than six statements of what God has already done on their behalf. In verse 1 - "thou *hast* been favourable ... thou *hast* brought back ..." In verse 2 - "thou *hast* forgiven ... thou *hast* covered ..." In verse 3 - "thou hast taken away ... thou hast turned ..." As John Trapp puts it, the fact that "God has, therefore, God will is a strong medium of hope, if not a demonstration of scripture-logic. 2nd Corinthians chapter 1 verse 10, 'Who *hath* delivered us from so great a death, and *doth* deliver us' ... in whom we trust that he will *yet* deliver us."

Verse 6. "Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?" "You enquire about the state of the churches in Wales. I have nothing but what is favourable to communicate, And here at Bala, we have had a very great, powerful, and glorious outpouring of the Spirit on the people Their convictions have been very clear and powerful, and in some instances so deep as to bring them to the brink of despair. Their consolations have also been equally strong. If the Lord should be graciously pleased to continue the work in the way that it has prevailed for some weeks past, the devil's kingdom will be in ruins in this neighbourhood. 'Ride on, ride on, thou King of Glory!' is the present cry of my soul day and night. I verily believe that the Lord means to give the kingdom of darkness a dreadful shake, for He takes away its pillars. Those that were foremost in the service of Satan and rebellion against God are now the foremost in seeking salvation through the blood of the Lamb. It is an easy work to preach the gospel of the kingdom here at this time. Divine truths have their own infinite weight and importance on the minds of the people. Beams of divine light, together with divine irresistible energy, accompany every truth delivered. It is glorious to see how the stoutest hearts are bowed down, and the hardest melted. I would not have missed seeing what I have lately seen, no, not for the world."

Thomas Charles of Bala

Verse 6. "... that thy people may rejoice in thee." The words before us teach us that gratitude has an eye to the giver, even beyond the gift - "that thy people may rejoice in Thee." Those who were revived would rejoice not only in the new life but in the Lord who was the author of it. Joy in the Lord is the ripest fruit of grace.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 6. "... that thy people may rejoice in thee." Hope, too, can be a source of rejoicing. Abraham rejoiced not in present things but do you wish to hear whence he drew his joy? Listen to the Lord speaking to the Jews, John chapter 8 verse 56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Hope heaped up his joys.

Le Blanc

Verse 7. "Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation." It is not merely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but all is mercy from first to last - mercy that met us by the way - mercy that looked upon us in our misery - mercy that washed us from our sins in his own blood - mercy that covered our nakedness and clad us in His own robe of righteousness - mercy that led and guided us by the way - and mercy that will never leave us nor forsake us till mercy has wrought its perfect work in the eternal salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ.

Barton Bouchier

Verse 7. "Shew us thy mercy ..." 'Tis true I am a mighty sinner, but He is a more mighty Saviour. Have I sinned to the uttermost? He has saved to the uttermost. True, I am death, but Christ is life; I am darkness, but Christ is light; I am sin, but Christ is holiness; I am guilt, but Christ is righteousness; I am emptiness and nothingness, but Christ is fulness and sufficiency; I have broken the law, but Christ has fulfilled the law. On Him, therefore, I'll lean, and live, and hope.

Edward Pearse (1673)

A Preacher's Guide (William Jay of Bath)

William Jay of Bath had the following notes of guidance prefixed to the Bible, which he generally used in the course of his study. They are guidelines which any of us who attempt to divine God's Word aright might keep before us in that same exercise:

In Reading this Book, let me guard against four things -

1. The contractedness of the systematic.
2. The mysticism of the Allegorizer.
3. The dogmatism of the Bigot.
4. The presumption of the Rationalist.

Let me tremble at God's Word, and let me, in reading it, keep three purposes in view -

1. To collect facts rather than form opinions.
2. To regulate practice rather than encourage speculation.
3. To aid devotion rather than dispute.

A Letter From William Huntingdon

Dear Friends,

I have no doubt that you have striven against your violent temptations, against the carnal enmity of your minds, against the corruptions of your hearts, against your evil tempers and your besetting sins, with all your might; and after all this wearisome toil and labour, matters are still the same, and sometimes rather worse. Then you resolve, and watch, and work with more care, more diligence and more good intention; and the more you labour, the more the stream runs against you. Then you fret, grieve and conclude that

your family concerns, and daily and unexpected trials are laid in your way for the purpose of hindering you, and that it is vain for you to strive any more, for you never shall obtain deliverance. All these things are against us.

Seeing then, that we gain no ground this way, let us try another. Let us see what looking to Jesus will do. Hear, therefore, what He says: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides Me there is no Saviour." Here we are to look for salvation, and for all the help we stand in need of. "I will look to the hills, from whence cometh my help? my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth." And what did any one ever get by this looking unto Jesus? Why "they looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." And is that all? No; for while we look, "as through a glass darkly," we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of God.

Looking can do what labouring will not do. "Let us, therefore," says Paul, "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith. Looking implies believing. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so that all who were bitten by the serpents might live, "so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Looking implies hope and expectation. God has laid our help upon His dear Son, who is "mighty to save;" and when poor sinners hear of this, they are led by the Holy Spirit to hope for it in Christ, and to expect it from no other quarter.

And don't you know how Jesus is delighted over poor sinners looking to Him? He says, "Let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance, for ... thy countenance is comely."

William Huntingdon.

