

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 141 issued January 2020

Index

1. The Pastor's Letter (May 1979) – Children and Self-righteousness
2. Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls – Swapping
3. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 85 (concluded)
4. Snippets – Thought Provoking Thoughts
5. When I was a Child – Gleanings in Spurgeon's "Early Years"



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)

Children and Self-Righteousness

The Pastor's Letter May 1979

Dear Friends,

As most of us realise, alongside the joy and pleasure of endeavouring to rear up our children in the fear and nurture of the Lord, there is a that great measure of responsibility that compels us ever to be watchful in this task and privilege that God has given to us. Many able and worthwhile words have been written on the subject, and, no doubt, many more will be written before the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ leaves this world of ours.

There is just one particular aspect of the question that I would like to mention in our few lines for this month. It is an aspect that is, perhaps, best briefly mentioned in order to fasten the thought of it more firmly in our hearts and minds; it is an aspect that is, perhaps, not mentioned much at all, or considered much at all, by some parents in the rearing of their children; it is the issue of “self-righteousness,” and the danger of unrebuked self-righteousness in the make-up of those who are the offspring of believing mothers and fathers.

What we mean is this: how do we react to outward manifestations of sin in our children? Our reaction runs along fairly typical lines: we receive shock, register surprise or disgust, administer rebuke or punishment as the case might be, etc. Our little Tommy or Mary suddenly lets drop some choice word or phrase picked-up in the playground, and it hits our ears like an unguided missile. Just how we deal with the situation varies, but one thing is sure, we feel that we must deal with it, even if it only means ignoring it for the time being. The point is, the committing of the sin has registered with us, and we feel compelled to try and deal with it – nip it in the bud, curb it, or whatever. In that “bad word” we have witnessed sin in our child, clearly read it as sin, and decided on some course of action on account of it. The same

thing applies with lies, or stealing, or cheating, or a dozen-and-one other accepted manifestations of the sin question. When we see or hear our children sinning, we endeavour to take some course of action to deal with that sin.

But what about our children's self-righteousness? Do we fully recognise self-righteousness as a sin? And are we spiritually astute enough to recognise some of the traits of it when it appears in the young lives that we are made responsible for?

Children are born mimics, and the children of Christians can very often mimic the things of the Spirit of God which they see in their believing parents. This is quite natural, and it is not, of itself, necessarily wrong, especially in the very young children. However, it can conceivably develop into a hypo-critical charade and fill the "growing" child with that greatest of all sins for keeping men and women away from the true saving grace of the gospel – self-righteousness. Do we sufficiently appreciate that enough at times? - that the sin of self-righteousness is one of *the* cardinal sins of the Word of God? Blasphemy and drunkenness have slain their thousands, but self-righteousness its tens of thousands. It is that inbred feature of fallen human nature that will not submit itself to the only accepted and acceptable righteousness that there is, in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the spirit of the Pharisee that says, "I thank God that I am not like other men;" and it can begin at a fairly early age with the children of Christians believing that they are not like other children. As far as privilege goes, believers' children have an apartness that is not to be minimised in any way; but with regards to *position* before a Holy God, they are the "children of wrath even as others."

As we endeavour to turn our children from sin to righteousness, let us remember that one of the greatest of all sins that they need turned from is their own nature-bred self-righteousness. To endeavour to turn them from that is one of those God-given ways of the Word of God to turn them to seek that true righteousness in the Lord our Righteousness

Himself. Do we rebuke sin in the children that the Lord has given to us? Then, we do, indeed, what we ought to do. But do we recognise sin for the many-headed monster that it is, and do we realise that one of the hardest heads to remove is the one that bears the face of apparent grace upon it? In this, as in all things, may the Lord be our helper and grant us grace in our every need.

Yours sincerely,

W. J. Seaton

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

I'm sure boys and girls, that you all know what it is to "swap" something. It's one of the most popular things that boys and girls do. Perhaps, for example, you have a pal who has a good book that you have been wanting to read for a long time, and you know that your pal would dearly like to have your box of paints; you might make a bargain with your pal, and say, "Let's swap: I'll give you my box of paints for your book." You would *exchange* the one thing for the other; isn't that right?

Now, the Bible tells us of a marvellous exchange that God was willing to make with the children of Israel once. He said, "For your brass, I will bring gold; and for iron, I will bring silver; for wood, brass, and for stones, iron." In other words, whatever the people of Israel would give to God's service He would give them greater things in return, even though some of the things that they would give wouldn't be

of much value, in some people's eyes.

Some boys and girls think that there isn't anything that they can really offer to God or do for God's glory. But, if those things are really done with a desire to please God and bring honour to His name, God will be pleased with whatever you do and will give you greater things in exchange for them.

But, how will I begin to please God? You may be saying. Well, it's by believing in *the greatest exchange of all* that the Bible tells us about. Here's what it says: "For he (the Lord Jesus Christ) became sin for us ... that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It means that Jesus took our sin – all our evil thoughts and actions – and He suffered on the cross for them. And because He did that, we are able to take His righteousness – all His goodness and holiness – and be forgiven for our sin. You see the exchange, don't you? Jesus took our sin, so that we could have His righteousness and be forgiven.

That's the first thing you must do to please God – you must believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart. Once you believe in Christ with all your heart, then you can on pleasing God from day to day by obeying His Word – the Bible – and doing what it says. When you do that, then God will bless you in exchange for that.

Love,
Mrs Seaton



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 85 (concluded)

Verse 7. "Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation." The Lord is a God who "delights in mercy", and freely gives it to every person who comes to Him for it. According to Matthew Henry, the

behaviour of the father who went out to meet the returning prodigal son is but a picture of God's behaviour towards the sinner who repents and returns to Him. "His father *saw* him", he says, "there were *eyes* of mercy; he ran to meet him, there were *legs* of mercy; he put his *arms* around his neck, there were *embraces* of mercy; he *kissed* him, there were *kisses* of mercy; he *said* to him, there were *words* of mercy; *bring hither* the best robe, there were *deeds* of mercy; and *put it on*, there were *wonders* of mercy – all mercy. Oh, what a God of mercy He is."

Verse 8. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" The true attitude for a sinner to take in the presence of divine revelation, is that of a listener. To enter the place of a doer before you have occupied that of a *listener*, is to reverse God's order, and throw everything into confusion. Adam tried this plan and found it a failure. He tried "works". He "sewed fig leaves together", but it was no use. He could not even satisfy his own conscience or remove his guilty fear. He had to **listen** to the voice of God – to hearken to divine revelation.

From Things New and Old

Verse 8, "I will hear" The eye as a mere organ of sense must give place to the ear. Therefore, it is wittily observed, that our Saviour in commanding the amputation of the offending hand, foot, and eye in Mark chapter eleven never spoke of the ear. If thy hand, thy foot, or thine eye offend thee deprive thyself of them; but part not with thine ear, for that is an organ to use unto thy soul's salvation. The Jews had eyes to see Christ's miracle, but because they had no ears to hear His wisdom, therefore they had no feet to enter His kingdom. The way into the house is by the door, not by the window: the eye is but the window of the heart, the ear is the door. Now Christ stands knocking at the door, not at the window, and He will not come in at the window, but at the door. "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." He now comes in by His oracles, not by His miracles; the way to open and let Him in is by the door – to hear His voice. Open your ears therefore to this heavenly voice. Bernard describes a good ear like this: - "It willingly hears what is taught, wisely understands what it hears, and obediently practices what it understands. O give me such an ear, and I

will hang on it jewels of gold, and ornaments of praise.

Thomas Adams

Verse 10. “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Here is the whole story of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a blessed reminder that God is “just” and yet “the justifier” of all them that trust in Him. *Mercy* and *truth* are strange bedfellows, and they can never ordinarily be reconciled in our favour. If God would be merciful to us, then *truth* would rise up in arms and condemn us as guilty in its sight. We stand in need a *peace* with God, but *righteousness* cannot possibly permit such an unequal yoke as this. Yet, says David, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other”. How is this? Only through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: on the person of His Son on the Cross, God fulfilled all His perfect truth and satisfied all His perfect righteousness and brought mercy and peace to those who stood in such dire need of it. He showed himself “just” and yet, “the justifier” of all them that believe. The Cross is, indeed, the “trysting place where heaven’s love and heaven’s justice meet.”

Verse 11. “Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven.” “Truth shall spring out of the earth.” Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God. “Righteousness shall look down from heaven.” As if it threw up the windows, and leaned out to gaze upon a penitent people, whom it could not have looked on before without an indignation which would have been fatal to them.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Verse 13. “Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us *in the way of his steps*.” And here is how Mr Standfast stood fast in the Pilgrim’s Progress: - “I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too.”

Snippets

Thought-provoking Thoughts



End of the year advice from Matthew Henry.

“I do remember my faults this day;” (Genesis 41:9. “It is *best* to remember our duty, and to do it in its time; but if we have neglected that, it is *next best* to remember our faults and repent of them, and to do our duty at last. ‘Better late than never’”

Dreams and Realities.

“A man once applied to Rowland Hill for admission to membership in his church and began to give an account of his experience by relating a dream that he once had. “We will tell you what we think of your dream,” said the old preacher, “after we have seen how you go when you are awake!”

“He that cometh to God must believe that he is.”

As he that really comes to God must believe this, so he that really believes this cannot but come to God.

Robert Leighton

Work and Work.

“Work out your own salvation ... for it is God which worketh in you ...” Philippians 2.

“Alone He works in all,
Yet He alone seems,
Not to work.”

Thompson

When I was a Child

leanings in Spurgeon's "Early Years".

I remember well in my early days, seeing upon my grandmother's mantelshelf an apple contained in a phial. This was a great wonder to me, and I tried to investigate it. My question was, "How came the apple to get inside so small a bottle?" The apple was quite as big and round as the phial; by what means was it placed within it? Though it was treason to touch the treasures on the mantelpiece I took down the bottle and convinced my youthful mind that the apple never passed through its neck, and by means of an attempt to unscrew the bottom, I became equally certain that the apple did not enter from below. I held to the notion that by some occult means the bottle had been made in two pieces, and afterwards united in so careful a manner that no trace of the join remained. I was hardly satisfied with the theory, but as no philosopher was at hand to suggest any other hypothesis, I let the matter rest. One day, the next summer, I chanced to see upon a bough, another phial – the first cousin of my old friend – within which was growing a little apple which had been passed through the neck of the bottle while it was extremely small. The grand secret was out. I did not cry "Eureka!" "Eureka!" but I might have done so if I had then been versed in the Greek tongue. This discovery of my juvenile days shall serve for an illustration at the present moment. Let us get the apples into the bottles while they are little ...

When I was a very small boy, I was allowed to read the Scriptures at

family prayer. Once upon a time, when reading the passage in Revelation which mentions the bottomless pit, I paused, and said, “Grandpa, what can this mean? The answer was kind, but unsatisfactory, “Pooh, pooh, child, go on.” The child, however, intended to have an explanation, and therefore elected the same passage morning after morning, and always halted at the same verse to repeat the enquiry hoping that by repetition the good old gentleman would reply. The process was successful, for it is by no means the most edifying thing to hear the Mother of Harlots, and the beast with seven heads, every morning in the week, Sunday included, with no sort of alteration either of Psalm or Gospel; the venerable patriarch of the household therefore capitulated at discretion, with, “Well, dear, what is it that puzzles you?”

Now, “the child” had often seen baskets with very frail bottoms, which, in course of wear, became bottomless, and allowed the fruit placed therein to fall to the ground; here then was the puzzle – if the pit aforesaid had no bottom, where would all those people fall to who dropped out at its lower end? - a puzzle which rather startled the propriety of family worship and had to be laid aside for explanation at some more convenient season. I can remember the horror of my mind when my dear grandfather told me what his idea of “the bottomless pit” was. There is a deep pit, and the soul is falling down – Oh, how fast it is falling! There! The last ray of light at the top has disappeared, and it falls on – on – on, and so it goes on falling – on – on – for a thousand years! “Is it not getting near the bottom yet?” No, you are no nearer the bottom yet; it is the *bottomless pit*. It is on – on – on, and so the soul goes on falling perpetually into a deeper depth still, falling forever into “the bottomless pit” – on – on – on – on – into the pit that has no bottom! Woe, without termination, without hope of its coming to a conclusion.

When we used to go to school we would draw houses, and horses, and trees on our slates, and I remember how we used to write, “House” under the house, and “Horse” under the horse, for some persons might

have thought that the horse was a house. So, there are some people who need to wear a label round their necks to show that they are Christians at all, or else we might mistake them for sinners, their actions are so like those of the ungodly.

The prayer-meetings during the week were always kept up, but at certain seasons of the year grandfather and a few old ladies were all that could be relied upon. It occurred to me in riper years to ask my venerated relative how the singing was maintained. “Why, grandfather,” said I, “we always sang, and yet you don’t know any tunes, and certainly the old ladies didn’t.” “Why, child,” said he, “there’s one common metre tune which is all, ‘Hum Ha, Hum Ha,’ and I could manage that very well.” “But what if it happened to be a *Long* or *Short* metre hymn?” “Why, then, I either put in some Hum Ha’s or else I left some out; but we managed to praise the Lord.”

The Stambourne style of singing led me into trouble when I returned to my home. The notion had somehow entered my little head that the last line of the hymn must always be repeated, and grandfather had instilled into me as a safe rule that I must never be afraid to do what I believed to be right. So, when I went to the chapel where my parents attended, I repeated the last line whether the congregation did so or not. I required a great deal of punishment to convince me that a little boy must do what his parents think to be right; and though my grandfather made a mistake in that particular instance, I have always been grateful to him for teaching me to act according to my belief whatever the consequence might be.

As a child, when asked what I was going to be, I usually said that I was going to be a huntsman. A fine profession truly! Many young men have the same idea of being parsons as I had of being a

huntsman – a mere childish notion that would like the coat and the horn-blowing; the honour, the respect, the ease – and, they are probably even fools enough to think – the riches of the ministry. The fascination of the preacher’s office is very great to weak minds, and hence, I earnestly caution all young men not to mistake whim for inspiration, and a childish preference for a call of the Holy Spirit.

I once learnt a lesson, while thus foxhunting, which has been very useful to me as a preacher of the gospel. Ever since the day I was sent to shop with a basket, and purchased a pound of tea, a quarter a pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice, and on my way home saw a pack of hounds and felt it necessary to follow them over the hedge and ditch (as I always did when I was a boy), and found, when I reached home, that all the goods were amalgamated – tea, mustard, rice – into one awful mess, I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the thread of my discourse; and this makes me keep to firstly, secondly, and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be.

Then came a mother’s prayer, and some of the words of that prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is grey. I remember, on one occasion, her praying thus: “Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.” That thought of a mother’s bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience, and stirred my heart.