

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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- 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)

Christ "Plus"

Equals

"False Teaching"

(The Pastor's Letter (June/July 1980))

Dear Friends,

Visitors who were “Judaizers had come to Antioch and taught in the Church that along with man’s justification and salvation before God, that man had to be “circumcised” according to the old Jewish law. “Except ye be circumcised,” was their theological stance, “ye cannot be saved,” (Acts 15:1) “You must have Christ for your soul’s salvation,” they were saying, “and you must exercise faith in Christ for your soul’s salvation; *however*, along with Christ, you must have some other things, as well: you must have some of the rites and rituals of the old Mosaic Laws, and in particular, you must have the mark and operation of circumcision in your flesh to make your salvation full and valid.” Such was their eloquence that the Apostle Peter was taken in by their arguments. So much so that Paul had to “withstand Peter to the face” because “he was to be blamed” (Galatians 2:11)

The reasoning of the Judaizers ran. And what it simply amounted to was this: that a man was not justified by faith alone in Christ alone, but must have some other things *with* Christ and on top of his faith *in* Christ. And of course, that classical “Judaism” that so much troubled the Church in the early days of the apostles and the gospel of “works” and sacraments expounded by the Church of Rome and apostate Protestantism, are identical! They both say, “Jesus!” But they both say, “Jesus *PLUS!*” Jesus – plus circumcision; Jesus – plus works, and absolutions, and sacraments, and so forth. Identical! And it was over this issue of Jesus, plus, that Paul withstood Peter to the face at Antioch, because, as he says, “he was to be blamed.”

Now, wherein did Peter’s blame lie at that time? What had he done to merit that withering rebuke from his fellow-apostle Paul? And, in a

word, he had acted in such a way as to give *credence* to that *false* gospel that those Judaizing men were spreading, and thereby also *obscure* the *true* gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. And to Paul's mind, nothing could be more blameworthy in a professing child of God.

But what exactly had he done? Had *he himself* begun to preach this false gospel that said that with Jesus Christ for our soul's salvation we must have something else besides. Had *he himself* given a paper at a conference, or written a best-seller on the merits of this "other gospel?" Indeed, no; Peter had done none of these things. What had he done then? My friends, he had *attached himself* to these other men and their gospel, and by so doing had cast a blanket of obscurity over what the one and only true gospel in Christ really is; and had also held-up the possibility to the rest of the Church at Antioch that there was, perhaps, *some* truth in what these men were saying. "For before those certain men came from James (i.e., from Jerusalem) Peter did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision."

And this behaviour, as the whole of the epistle to the Galatians shows, was tantamount in Paul's eyes to giving *credence* to the false gospel then in circulation, and lending *obscurity* to what the *true* gospel in Christ was really all about.

Surely B. B. Warfield assesses rightly when he states that in the epistle to the Galatians above all others, the apostle Paul exercises, what he calls, "The Dogmatic Spirit." The dogmatic spirit, of course, is not to be confused with the "Goliath" spirit, that is always shouting, "Send somebody out to fight me," No, no; it is nothing like that. The dogmatic spirit is being able to perceive aright where a certain cause is going to lead, and act accordingly. Where a certain deviation from the truth of the gospel, or addition to the truth of the Gospel is going to end and affect the clarity of the Gospel.

Take a few minutes, my friends to read over and ponder these words from Warfield's writing on that subject of Paul's Dogmatic Spirit

in relation to those men at Antioch and Peter's misplaced involvement with them. Read the words a few times, if necessary; but grasp the inevitability" of what they are saying.

"They preached Christ as the promised Messiah of Israel to them too. The promised redemption was unattainable save through the promised Messiah. But though they preached that *only* in His name could salvation be had, they denied that it could be had in His name *alone*."

"In Christ *alone* is there salvation. In Christ *alone*; and that *in both senses* of the word, alone. Not only is there no salvation *except* in Him; but in Him is all that can be needed for salvation. Jesus *only*!"

"To depend on aught else *along with* Him, is as truly to lose Him, as to depend on aught else *instead* of Him." Jesus *only*; only Jesus!"

And it was that issue that Paul saw clearly at Antioch – not only in the purveyors of the false gospel, but in the misbehaviour of his dear brother Peter in attaching himself to those purveyors. The gospel, indeed, says, Jesus only and only Jesus; but what are we to say when professed evangelicals stand side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder with those who say the opposite? Are they not obscuring that Jesus only and only Jesus? Are they not giving credence to that Jesus plus? This is the real issue. We need only read Peter's presentation of the truth at Jerusalem following Paul's rebuke (Acts 15), and then his two glorious epistles, to see how he soon regained his gospel clarity. But this is the real issue. May God grant the church in our day to see it.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton.



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 89 (Continued)

Verse 1. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.” This one short verse contains the summary, pith, and argument of the whole psalm; wherein observe the *song’s theme* – the lovingkindness and truth of the Lord, manifested unto the whole world generally, and to David’s house (that is, the Church) especially.”

“God’s mercies I will ever sing;
And with my mouth I shall
Thy faithfulness make to be known
To generations all.”

John Boys.

Verse 2. “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.” The elect constitute and form one grand house of mercy. A house, erected to display and perpetuate – the riches of the Father’s grace, of the Son’s atoning merit, and of the Holy Ghost’s efficacious agency. This house, contrary to the fate of all temporal houses, will never fall down, nor ever be taken away. As nothing can be added to it, so nothing can be diminished from it. Fire cannot injure it; storms cannot overthrow it: age cannot impair it. It stands on a rock and is immovable as the rock on which it stands – the threefold rock of God’s inviolable decree of Christ’s finished redemption, of the Spirit’s never-failing faithfulness.

Augustus Toplady.

Verse 2. “For I have said Mercy shall be built up ...” Mention of a building of mercy presupposes miserable ruins and denotes that this

building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them. From top to bottom, from the foundation-stone to the top-stone, all is free and rich mercy to them. And the ground of this glorious building is God's covenant with His chosen: "I have made a covenant with my chosen."

Thomas Boston.

Verse 3. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant." On heaven's side is God Himself, the party who proposes the covenant agreement. Although he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him. The Father of mercies says, "These lost creatures cannot make a contract for themselves; and if another doesn't undertake for them, they must perish; yet they cannot even rightly choose one to undertake for them. So, I will choose one for them, and I will make a covenant with my chosen one." This is the Son, the last Adam. And who else is fit to be undertaker on man's side? Who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel or man was capable of it, but "the mighty One" of whom we read in verse 19, and whom the Father points out as His chosen One.

Thomas Boston.

Verses 3 - 4. "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah." Do you suppose that this was spoken to David in his own person only? No; indeed, but to David as the antitype, figure, and forerunner of Jesus Christ. God has "sworn" unto the Messiah, who was typified by David; unto his co-eternal Son, who stipulated to take upon himself the form of a servant. The "seed" are all those who have been given to Christ in the decree of election, and they shall be "established for ever." His "throne" shall be built up for all generations: his mediatorial throne, as King of saints and covenant Head of the elect.

Augustus Toplady.

Verse 4. “Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.” Observe here, that when Christ received this promise from his Father concerning the establishment of his throne to all generations, the great application is that his people shall be thus established. For, consider Christ in his Divine capacity as the Son of God, and his throne was already established, and had been from everlasting, and would have continued to be established without end, even if he had never become incarnate at all. Therefore, the promise shows that Christ shall reign, not simply as a person in the Godhead (which he ever did, ever will, and ever must), but mediatorially, as the deliverer and king of his Zion. Hence it follows that his people cannot be lost, for he would be a poor sort of a king who had no subjects to rule over. Consequently, that throne of glory, already encircled in part, will at last be completely surrounded by that innumerable company, the general assembly of the Church.

Augustus Toplady.

(To be Continued).

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Dear Boys and Girls,

I wonder how many of you know the name of Francis Ridley Havergal. I'm sure some of you may know some of the hymns she wrote, for Francis Ridley Havergal was a hymn-writer. Have you ever sung “Golden harps are sounding, Angel voices ring” or “I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus” or “Who is on the Lord's side”? these, and many other great hymns were written by Francis Ridley Havergal and in the hymns that she wrote she always loved to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ and all the He meant to her.

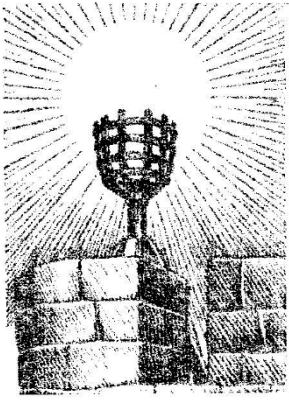
It wasn't always so, however, boys and girls, and the only thing that Francis Ridley Havergal really seemed to love when she was a little girl was her parents' garden where she used to spend most of her time looking at the flowers and sitting under the trees. She knew a great deal about the Bible and when she was only about eight years of age, she could repeat whole chapters of the Bible without making one mistake. But, although she knew the Bible, she didn't know the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour, and so, she had no real love for Him, but only for her garden.

One day when young Francis was reading some hymns written by a man called William Cowper, she came across these words – “My Father made them all.” She had always believed that God had made the world and all things in the world and all the things that grew in her garden. However, the words that struck young Francis Ridley Havergal were those two words at the beginning of the line – “*My Father* made them all.” Even in her young life she began to realise that, although God was her Creator – although He had made all things – still with all, God was not really her heavenly Father. Before God would really be her Father, she would have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all her heart.

This is true for every one of us, boys and girls; and as Francis Ridley Havergal later found Christ to be her Saviour, we pray that you, too, might find Him soon.

Mrs Seaton.





The Lower Lights

Urbane.

In Romans chapter 16 verse 9, Urbane is called “our *helper* in Christ;” and as such he is representative of a whole group and a whole grouping of people in the Word of God. When Paul enumerates the various gifts and callings within the Church of Christ, beginning with “apostles, and prophets, and teachers,” and so forth, he then goes on to make mention of those whom he simply calls, “helps.” Just precisely what they were is, perhaps, open to some speculation, but it hardly seems necessary to go beyond the plain, straightforward meaning of the term: they were those who helped!

“Helping” in the cause of the gospel is a very noble occupation, and whereas, it may be viewed as the *most* that *some* can do, it ought also to be viewed as the *least* that *all* can do. The apostle Paul himself was not above “helping” in any given situation where help was needed; remember how he gathered sticks for the fire on the rain-drenched island of Malta? But where some can possibly rise to no greater service in the word of God than helping, the Word of God, nevertheless, takes note of their service and acknowledges such. Mr Bunyan, who normally “bled the Bible” when you pricked him, got his downcast Pilgrim out of the Slough of Despond with the aid of “a man whose name was Help.” And Mr Spurgeon tells us of an old Puritan sermon that he once read on the words, “And Bartholomew.” The reason the old Puritan had spoken on the words, “And Bartholomew” was, because, as he rightly maintained, you never read of Bartholomew on his own. He always seems to be “tagging along” – lending a hand in whatever work seems to be to the fore or the forefront. “And

Bartholomew.” It’s a very limited phrase; but the possibilities of its scope are endless.

Those Women Who Laboured with me in the Gospel

Those women who laboured with me in the Gospel, were, no doubt, a party of “helpers” in all of Paul’s labours in the town of Philippi. They are not named beyond that collective description of them, but in all probability Lydia, the seller of purple from Thyatira, was amongst them, as also would have been some of those of her household who were converted and baptised after her. Perhaps the old Philippian jailer’s wife was one, or perhaps, one or two of his daughters. Who knows? One thing is sure, if their names are not in Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, they are, most assuredly, in the book of life, for, says Paul, “I entreat thee, true yokefellow, help those women who laboured with me in the gospel: with Clement also ... whose names are in the book of life”. Who was ***Clement***? For that matter, who was the “***true yokefellow***” to whom Paul wrote in his epistle to the Philippians? “And I entreat thee, true yokefellow.” Whoever he was, his description says it all: he was one who put his shoulder under the “yoke” of the gospel work in that town. And Paul now exhorts him to “help” those – those women – who helped Paul in that same gospel. “And I entreat thee, true yokefellow, ***help*** those women who laboured with me in the gospel.”

The apostle Peter speaks a precious word when he says, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another.” (1st Peter chapter 4 verse 10) We might well ask, ***what gift?*** Or ***which gift?*** And the short answer to that is, whatever gift, or whichever gift God has bestowed upon us in the context of the Church of Christ on this earth. As Paul puts it in one place, “the manifestation of the Spirit, is given to every man to profit withal.” Every man – every saint – has some gift and some calling within the body of the Church. And every gift and every calling are given to “every man” to “profit withal.” That doesn’t mean that the gift or calling is given to profit the person in all things; “to profit withal;” but it means that it is given ***to profit all with!*** To profit the whole body – the church – “that God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ.” It was a good bit of help that Aaron and Hur gave to Moses that day in the valley of Rephidim when they put a

boulder under him and kept his outstretched hands “steady, until the going down of the sun.”

As William Cowper reminds us:

“When Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel’s side:
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment, Amalek prevailed.”

So, Aaron and Hur came to the rescue; and with one shoulder a piece under Moses’s burden, they became his true yokefellows.

Mnason of Cyprus, An Old Disciple.

One thing about the Word of God is this, it is a very “comprehensive” book when it comes to holding out the encouragements of God for everything rendering in His name and for His praise. And not only does it take time and space to mention those who directly help by joining *their* labours to the labours of those who labour in the gospel, but it also takes into account those who furnish a bit of rest or respite to those who labour in the gospel.

In chapter 21 of the Acts of the Apostles, we find the apostle Paul on his way to Jerusalem. He stops off at the home of Philip the evangelist, and it’s there that Agabus the prophet speaks some words of solemn warning to Paul regarding his proposed trip to the Jewish capital. Agabus “took Paul’s girdle,” we’re told and having bound his own hands and feet with it, he declared, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle.” Paul is “moved,” and yet unmoved, by the scenes that follow the prophecy: “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?” he says, “for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Mighty words from the mighty Paul concerning a mighty undertaking in his life.

Now, we ought not miss the general scene, nor the events that follow on from Paul’s great words. Paul is “lodging” with the evangelist Philip at this time, and as Agabus the prophet takes Paul’s “girdle,” we are being

given a glimpse of the apostle taking a bit of respite from all his labours in the gospel. The girdle was that bit of the eastern dress that bound everything up and held the whole thing together. When a man was ready to work, or walk, etc., he “girded up” his garments. When he relaxed, he took off his girdle and laid it aside. Agabus takes Paul’s girdle; he doesn’t take it from Paul, but from the place where Paul has laid it aside as he has taken and is taking this bit of well-earned rest under Philip’s roof. Philip affords him such an opportunity; he is “given to hospitality,” and being given to hospitality is a great means in being a “help” in the gospel’s work.

But Paul leaves Philip’s house, and goes on to Jerusalem. And where will he find a lodging in Jerusalem – this marked man whom the Jews seek? It is here that we read for the one and only time of this “Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple;” “an old disciple,” Luke tells us in Acts, “with whom we should lodge.” Thus, in the self-same context that tells of Paul’s mighty words and deed, this is also written that “an old disciple” gave the Lord’s great servant “a lodging.” Just another “Lower Light.”

Good Hearing – A Constant Need

Some preachers are often marked by great shrewdness and mother wit; and will not only point the truth, but barb it, so that if once in, it will stick fast.

One of these preachers was once pronouncing with much earnestness on different ways in which men lose their souls. Under one head of remark, he said that men often lose their souls through excessive generosity. “What!” he exclaimed, “you tell me you never heard of that before? You say, ministers often tell us we lose our souls for our stinginess, and for being covetous – but who ever heard of a man that hurt himself by going too far the other way? I tell you how they do it. They sit down under the sermon, and when the preacher touches upon this sin and that sin, they do not take it to themselves, but give this part of the sermon to one brother, and that part to another brother. And so,

they give away the whole sermon, and it does them no good. And that's the way they lose their souls by being too generous”.

There is great truth in this remark. The want of a self-applying conscience causes much of the best of preaching to fall like rain upon a rock, from which it soon runs off; or, if a little is caught in a hollow, it only stagnates, and then dries away, leaving no blessing behind.

A sermon, however true and forcible, thus disposed of, does no good to those among whom it is so silently distributed; while it leaves him, who squanders its treasures to perish at last in the poverty and emptiness of soul.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

John Brown of Haddington

Much Learning in a Humble Heart

The vast majority of the mighty servants of the Church of Christ have walked “the studious cloisters pale” – attending the old and famed schools of learning in their day. Few, if any, had a divinity school such as young John Brown attended, for there, he formed one half of the entire student body and one half of the entire teaching staff, as well. Two pupils! – young John Brown, and old John Ogilvie. Two teaches! – old John Ogilvie, and young John Brown. Such was the staff and student body of “The Tabernacle,” as it sat snug and safe from the eyes of men amidst the Perthshire hills – “four turf walls and a heather thatch,” as it has been described.

John Brown, whose name was to be linked so unbreakably with that of Haddington, was born in the year 1722 in the village of Carpow, near Abernethy. The day of his salvation dawned very early in his case, for it was in 1730, when still only a boy of eight years old, that a visiting preacher at the communion services in Abernethy “spoke much to the commendation of Christ,” and there began a growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ that has had few equals. The young convert's faith

was soon to be tried, however, for both of his parents were taken from him within a few short years. It is here that the older half of the “student/staff” occupants of the Tabernacle – and indeed the Tabernacle itself – enters into the picture.

John Ogilvie was born during the “killing times” in Scotland, and so, was an old man by the time young John Brown had entered into Christ’s flock. The old man opened, not only his home, but his heart and his mind to the young fatherless boy, and he began to instruct him in the ways of the Lord more perfectly. John Ogilvie had never had the opportunity of any “formal” education; but although unable to read or write, he had stored his heart and his mind with the riches of God’s grace and God’s Word. These he imparted to his young friend who in turn, instructed the old patriarch in the “learning of letters.” From thence arose the Tabernacle. “For their mutual improvement,” we are told, “the two Johns constructed their moorland shelter, and there, as circumstances of employment permitted, young John improved and extended old John’s knowledge of the letter of the Scripture, and old John, in turn, gave his herd-boy the benefit of his long experience of the Christian warfare, and of his intercourse with the saints of a former generation ... a turf shelter on a rugged hillside! A barley-bannock to ward-off the attacks of hunger! A vessel of clear spring-water to slake their thirst! Above all else, the Book of Life!” This was the Tabernacle.

With the passing of the older saint, however, this happy state of affairs was brought to an end. But upon the foundation that old John had laid in young John’s heart there was to rise up an edifice of great power to the glory of God’s name. The story of how the young John Brown walked over 24 miles to the town of St. Andrew to purchase the Greek New Testament that he had toiled and saved to buy, is one of the classic stories of the Christian Church. The incredulous bookseller in that town took one look at the young herd-boy from the Perthshire hills, and would probably have chased him from his premises but for the intervention of some of the town’s University Professors who happened to be browsing in the shop at the particular time. “Bring him the book,” they declared, “and if he can read it, he shall have it free as a present

from us.” Thereupon, young John opened the book, and in fluent Greek read the desired portions and obtained his prize.

This thirst for knowledge with which to glorify his God went on unabated. And when he was called to his life’s work at Haddington, the one who had never known the inside of a Divinity Hall, save for that rustic establishment in the Perth hills, was later to combine his pastorate with a Professorship of Theology. He was expert in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and could hold his own with Arabic, Syriac, Persic, Ethiopic, as well as with the modern languages, of French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and German. And yet, his language and learning were always that of the Tabernacle: “There is no language, ancient or modern,” he used to say, “like that of the grace of God ... no history like that of Jesus Christ ... no science like that of beholding the Word made flesh” “I would not exchange the learning of one hour’s fellowship with Jesus Christ,” he said, “for all the liberal learning of then thousand universities.”

The goal of all his seeking, and searching, and storing, and accumulating is summed-up in what he told his sons near the end of his life; “Commend Jesus,” he told them, “there is none like Christ; there is none like Christ.”