

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.

Why Praise to the Christian is Important.

(Pastor's Letter March 1981)

There is no greater exercise laid upon Christians than to praise God, bless God, and thank God; and there is no better way to promote that exercise than by remembering the Lord's grace and lovingkindness towards us. It is this "device" that the apostle Paul employs in his introduction of his epistle to the Ephesians, when he pronounces, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." "Let us bless God," he is saying, "because God has blessed us." And the two points of remembrance that he especially sets before us there are – *one*, Who God is for us: and *two*, What God has done for us.

He is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," which simply means that He is our Covenant God, and our Covenant-keeping God.

One of the great Old Testament phrases is, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." It was a title often invoked on the part of the Children of Israel as a reminder that they would, indeed, come into all of those blessings that God had promised to give them through His covenant made with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. The blessings of receiving a land to be their possession, and so forth. And so, whenever they spoke about, "the God of Abraham," they were speaking about the God who had promised *to* Abraham, and *in* Abraham, and *through* Abraham, to bless them, and to grant them those temporal and earthly things (and others besides, of course).

Now then, when Paul speaks about our God as being "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "he is not simply speaking about that relationship that they have one towards the other in the Trinity as Father and Son; but he is speaking about that "covenant" relationship whereby there is guaranteed to us all the blessings of redemption for ever and ever. Thus, Paul speaks about us being, "blessed" "with all *spiritual* blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ." The "outer shell" of the

covenant of old, if you like, was the land of Canaan; the *eternal fruit* of the covenant is Canaan above, and all the blessings that lead us to that “Land of pure delight,” and which we enjoy when we arrive there. And these blessings we have, because we have a God who keeps covenant” with His people, because of the covenant He has made with His Son and through His Son.

“The God of Abraham” was a great title for the people of Israel of old; it still is for us, now that we understand and know something of the fulness of it. But the greatest title of all is, “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The God who has not withheld His only Son from us, but has given Him, as He himself says, “a covenant for the people.” When we remember *who* God is for us, then we have ample cause, and ample reason to “Bless” Him, to thank Him, and to praise Him.

What has God done for us that might serve as a basis for our thanking Him, and praising Him, and blessing Him? It would be easier to answer, what has He not done for us? For there is nothing that He has not done for us. And so, Paul gathers up every true covenant benefit for us when he says that God has blessed us “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” The greatest blessings are spiritual blessings; those that will last as long as heaven itself lasts; and those that are in Jesus Christ our Lord. Blessed be God for these, says Paul.

It is these “spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” that the apostle then goes on to enumerate and deal with, of course, in the verses that follow in Ephesians chapter one: - “according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world ... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself ... in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,” and so forth. “Spiritual blessings”! And what a heap of spiritual blessings that first chapter of Ephesians sets before us. As the hymn-writer has it:

“Blessing abound, where’er He reigns.”

And where Christ reigns in our hearts by faith, then we see those blessings as we ought to do, and we thank God – “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” – for them.

As old Samuel Rutherford expressed it, “He has engaged us hand over foot to free grace.” “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.” There is no better way to glorify Him than by remembering *who* He is for us; there is no better way to “enjoy” Him than by remembering the “gracious benefits” He has bestowed upon us. He is the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” who has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Yours sincerely,

W. J. Seaton.



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 89 (Concluded)

Verse 38. “But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.” This 89th Psalm consists of as many verses as year does of weeks, and has, like the year, its summer and winter. The summer part is the former; wherein the church, having reaped a most rich crop (the best blessings of heaven and earth) the psalmist breaks forth into the praises of their gracious Benefactor, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.” So he begins, and so he continues for a great way. And who now would expect anything but mercies, and singing and summer all the way? But summer ceases and winter commences at this verse 38; “But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.” Mercies and

singing are now turned into troubles and mourning. Nothing shall you hear now but bitter queries and expostulations – until you come to the last verse; and there, the good man has come to himself again. Though God be angry with His people, the psalmist cannot part with Him in discontent. Though God had laden them with crosses, he lifts up his head and preents God with blessing – “Blessed be the Lord for ever more. Amen, and Amen.” He blesses Him for winter as well as for summer, for troubles as well as for mercies. And so, if we circle the psalm, and bring both ends together, we find a fit resemblance between the year and it. For the last verse of the psalm has as much affinity with the first, as far as content goes, as the last day of the year has with the first in its season.

Thomas Du-gard

Verse 41. “All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.” Idle passers-by, who have nothing else to do, must needs have a pluck at this vine, and they do it without difficulty, seeing the hedges are gone; (verse 40 – “Thou hast broken down all his hedges.”) Woe is the day when every pretty reasoner has an argument against religion, and men are fluent in their objections against the gospel of Jesus. Although Jesus on the cross is nothing to them, and they pass Him by without inquiring into what He has done for them, yet they can loiter as long as you will, if there be but the hope of driving another nail into His hands and helping to crucify the Lord afresh. They will not touch Him with the finger of faith, but they pluck at Him with the hand of malice.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 48. “What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies within me. When I read the dates of the tombs – of some that died yesterday, and

some six hundred years ago, I think of that great day when we shall all of us be *contemporaries* and make our appearance together.

Anonymous

Verse 51. “Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.”

One old version of the Bible renders it, “They have scoffed at the tardiness of Thy Messiah’s footsteps.” How true that was. All of Christ’s ways and actions – His manner of birth and place of upbringing – were a constant source of reproach and scoffing for the unbelieving Jews of His day on earth. The whole path that His footsteps trod was a scandal to those people because they failed to see the necessity of such a “walk” for Messiah as the fulfilment of the very heart and centre of all prophecy concerning Him. “Thou shalt bruise his heel.” His “footsteps” at His first coming had to be of such a lowly manner as would feel and show that bruising of His heel predicted. But because men failed to see this, then they scoffed at the “tardiness,” and made His gracious lowliness a stumbling block to their hearts. It is the same with regards to the imagined “slowness” of His footsteps, concerning His second coming. “Where is the promise of his coming?” they scoffed in Peter’s Day, and do so yet, if they give any thought to that coming again at all. But as surely as He appeared in *exactly* the way predicted and spoken of for His first coming, so He will also in His second:

“Our God shall come, and not be slow,
His footsteps cannot err.”

Verse 52. “Blessed be the Lord for ever more. Amen, and Amen.” He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us praise God before we pray, while we pray, and when we have done praying, for he always deserves it of us. If we cannot understand him, we will not distrust him.

C. H Spurgeon



Mrs Seaton's Letter
To
The Boys and Girls

Dear boys and girls,

Time to Get Up.

Do you have to be “called” in the morning, or do you wake up at the right time, a knock on the door, or a shake and the words: “Time to get up!” It is always good to be ready on time, ready for breakfast, ready for school, always ready in the morning. You will be ready for the whole day if you first hear and obey God’s call in the morning.

He called Moses, saying, “Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to be in the top of the Mount.” You cannot hear God’s voice in your ears, but you can hear it in your heart. So, when you get up in the morning do not leave your bedside without kneeling down and presenting yourself to God. Ask Him to keep you in the right way, the way of truth and goodness, all through the day, for when you do this, you can start the day in earnest, wherever you are, at school, or at work, or at play. Each one has something to do which is their own special bit. God gives to each of His children some task however small it may be, and He wants us to do our work faithfully, heartily, and with joy, “As to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:23).

Jesus spoke about a man who went away leaving his servants in charge of his house. Each one had something to do, and the porter was commanded to watch at the door. If the Master returned without warning, what then? Doing their work faithfully, expecting their Master to come any moment, those servants would be happy to welcome him and eager to show him the house, clean and ready, and safe. They would be happy at his smile of approval and receive the reward he had for them. But if those servants left to themselves neglected their duties

and played about all day, or quarrelled amongst themselves, wasting time in argument, what then? The Master would return when they were not looking for him and find his house in disorder, work at a standstill – nothing being done. No smile for those servants, no reward for them.

The Lord Jesus asks and expects us all to do our bit, to learn our lessons or fill in our little daily tasks in such a way that at any time He may come to look at them and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have done little things faithfully today; I will soon give you greater things to do for Me.”

Love

Mrs Seaton.

God's Sovereignty in Choosing Ministers.

(J. C. Philpot)

I sometimes seem to see in my own mind what true preaching should be: how pure and clear in doctrine, how sound and deep in experience, how firm and faithful in precept. I have a view before the eyes of my enlightened understanding what the ministry of the Spirit is, as distinct from the ministry of the letter. I see that there is a power, a savour, an unction, an authority, a weight and a reality in the ministry of men sent and taught of God, which is as distinct from the ministry of men unsent and untaught, as the miracles of Moses were distinct from the miracles of the magicians, or the preaching of Paul from that of the seven sons of Sceva.

Let none here mistake my meaning. I do not wish to set up *my* preaching as that in which I see the ministry of the Spirit in His fulness. I desire with all my heart that it should be such; it is enough to make me quake and tremble with fear to think that it is not so; for there are no

half-ministers as there are no half-Christians. An “almost minister” is as far from the ministry as an almost Christian is from Christianity. But I believe that the sovereignty of God is as much displayed in choosing ministers to preach as in choosing men to be saved. And if, in the exercise of that sovereignty, the Lord called me from Academic halls and seats of lettered ease to preach His truth amongst His people, He surely had as much right to do so as to call others of His servants from the plough or from the loom.

It amounts to this: what any of us who are ministers are worth being; what we have worth possessing; what we know worth proclaiming; what we preach worth hearing – we are indebted for those things to sovereign grace, and to sovereign grace alone. On this point I will yield to none. Let some of my brethren in the ministry have more grace; others a deeper experience; others more ministerial ability; others more unction and savour. I will willingly yield to them the palm in all of these things, so far as I see that they are thus blessed and favoured. But I will not yield to them in this one point, that what we are, we are by sovereign grace.

On this ground we may safely meet. Here, Ephraim envies not Judah. Here, pride and self-exaltation – fall here, self-drops into its right place – the dust; and here Jesus is exalted to His rightful place as Lord of all.

One Saving Cross.

Thomas Guthrie

An Ancient historian tells us that at the siege of Babylon, Darius condemned three thousand captives to the death of the cross.

Another relates how when Alexander inflicted long-threatened vengeance on Tyre, he crucified two thousand prisoners, and that the crosses stood on the shore thicker than ship’s masts in harbour.

When the Romans let fly their eagles against Jerusalem a spectator informs us that there wasn't enough wood to make the crosses required for the crucifixions ordered.

Yet – had all of Babylon's, Tyre's and Jerusalem's crosses been raised together, with an angel from heaven on each, to procure our salvation, they could never have done so.

Glorious in His Apparel.

By

Alexander Smellie

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This who is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?” (Isaiah 63:1)

The Church does not err when she interprets Isaiah's vivid words of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the Edom of His obedience and the Bozrah of His anguish, He returns a conqueror. Our Deliverer is not decked in such embroidery as commanders and generals are accustomed to wear:

“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the Tree.”

But to that “dying crimson” we owe life and hope and all things. Indeed, Christ's dress is strange and unusual; but its very strangeness is its excellent glory.

The Swaddling Bands – we recall them. They are the glorious apparel of our God. They publish the miracle of His lowly love.

You do not find other biographies announcing that, when the man they portray was born, his mother swathed him round with a baby's dress. It would be foolish to commemorate the universal fact; this is the helplessness with which you and I start our journey of life. Why should the gospels set in the forefront that which is too trite to be explained with reference to anybody else? It is because there is nothing trite about

it when it has to do with Jesus Christ. It is the wonder of wonders that He is so weak and small as to need a mother's ministry and an infant's clothes.

For He was God who made earth and heaven; God in whom we live and move and are. For a season God has elected to put away His divine government, and His eternal honour and powers. With a man's limitations, He has entered the world of men. And He assumes our nature – not in its prime, but in the frailty of its first beginnings. Why does He do it?

So that no experience of ours may remain outside His experience, His sympathy, and our redemption. So that little children, equally with grown men, may say – “This is our God for ever and ever.” Let us give thanks for the swaddling bands.

The Hem of His Garment – for that is fresh proof that our Lord is glorious in His apparel. It preaches the miracle of His healing grace.

Sometimes in Israel, a leper was so full of his hideous disease that it passed from himself into his clothing. It was the opposite with Christ. He was so full of restoring virtue that His cures not only leaped from His fingers and shone from His eyes, and sang in His voice and tingled through His flesh, but *infected* His raiment with sweet and vital influences. Down to the blue fringe of His long loosed outer robe as well as His matchless person, there was medicinal strength; so that, when a trembling woman, whose case was hopeless, touched it and Him, her whole frame was shot through with the sting of sudden and delightful health.

It is rich comfort to know that we cannot get near Him without His salvation ending our misery and transfiguring ourselves. We “touch” Him in so many ways: in a Bible verse that we have read fifty times without any apparent emotion; or when kneeling to pray, we can only manage to utter, “Lord, save me!” Let me lay my poor hand on the hem of His garment, and my iniquities are forgiven, my diseases are healed,

my life is redeemed from destruction – for, strong is the grace of my good Physician.

The Seamless Robe - We remember it. It is Christ's glorious apparel. It points us to the miracle of His unflecked holiness.

No doubt, Chrysostom has a point when he insists that this inner coat of our Lord was a peasant's dress, betokening "the poorness of His garments; and that in His clothing, as in all things, He followed a simple fashion." But Josephus, I recall, writes that among the sacred vestments of the Jewish High Priest was a tunic, woven without seam; and in the tunic of Jesus, I prefer to see a hint of His priestly sanctity. Something of spiritual value there is – something to arrest attention – in the coat which those four reckless men under the Cross had not the will to tear, but which they determined to keep intact.

For certain, the Christ who comes to bless us is clothed with righteousness as a garment. It demonstrates His fitness to champion our derelict cause. If one slightest flaw had been found in Him, He would have had to provide atonement for Himself.

But because there is no flaw, He is free to bring us pardon and peace. Yes, and His perfection is the assurance of our perfecting. He takes care we are conformed to His stainlessness. So, He will dwell within us by His Spirit; and breathe into us His own breath; and, as we look to Him, He will robe us in His own purity that cannot be rent asunder.

The Grave Clothes – is where we would turn to last of all. They are His glorious apparel. They proclaim the miracle of His overflowing life.

In Christ's rock tomb was a long ledge of stone, and, two inches higher, a recess. On the ledge the body had reposed in its sleep; in the recess the head was pillowed. And, on the third morning, Peter and John, coming to the grave, saw a surprising thing. The body clothes lay by

themselves, where they had been when the body of the Lord occupied them; and on the upper level, lay the napkin which had been twisted like a turban round His brow. “Wound round,” is the remarkable word that John uses to describe it; like a turban, still erect, although the blessed head had gone. No wonder they “believed.” That napkin told them that, of His own accord, Jesus had passed out of it and away. If men had taken Him, they would have taken His wrappings too, or simply tossed them into a heap. But Christ Himself had withdrawn; easily, soaring, conquering. And His resurrection body, being so different from the body in which He had toiled and bled, there was no disturbance of the raiment that covered Him in His chamber of peace.

So – nothing hampers Him now that He lives again. No restriction curb Him in that humanity which He keeps, and will keep, through the ages of the ages. He goes where He chooses to go; He does what He wills to do. And He gives that which He possesses to us – a spiritual life here, and a glorified eternal life hereafter – disentangled from the grave-clothes, and released from every chain.

From the night of the Manger to the morning of the Garden tomb, how singular and how glorious is Christ’s apparel.