

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 156 issued July 2022

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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)

David's Great Psalm (Psalm 119)

The Pastor's Letter (September 1981).

Dear Friends,

Anything that has to do with the Word of God should find a ready place in our hearts and minds and this is certainly true of David's "Great Psalm." Psalm 119. It is *especially* true, perhaps, with regards to the second part of the psalm. Verses 9 to 16. Its great theme is the practical outworking of the Word of God in our lives: the Word of God, not simply in our mouths, or our minds, or, indeed, even our "hearts," but in our "hands" and in all our actions. And that is an issue that, surely, ever needs to be before us, and revived amongst us.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" That is the question that David poses right at the outset of the psalm. What follows on from that is the undeniable testimony that it is God's truth – if that truth is working in us as it ought to do – that then governs our lives and is to direct our lives according to its dictates. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Answer? "By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

Thy word have I hid in mine heart," says the psalmist again, in the 11th verse of the psalm; and for this purpose – "that I might not sin against thee." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies," he says again, in verse 14: and as the old Puritan, Thomas Manton, observes, David not only rejoices in God's testimonies, God's scriptures – but in the *way* of God's scriptures - in the "way of thy testimonies." "His delight was not in speculation, or talk," he says, "but, in obedience and practice; in the *way* of thy testimonies."

In other words, the word of God is productive, and meant to be productive, in our lives and in the lives of our churches; but, sad to say, there seems to be a ready acceptance of the notice – even among evangelical and reformed churches – that we can safely stop short of the

actual implementing of God's Word in our midst so long as it is retained in "sound" and in "form."

For example: some time ago we were told of an evangelical minister in one of our State Churches who really "lashed out" against some of his "Elders." The minister pronounced from the pulpit that he had heard better language during his days in the army barracks than he heard from some of his "Elders." Quite a statement; and it sent the "evangelical wing" of that particular church home rejoicing that they had such an outspoken preacher. What should have happened, of course, was that the said minister should have taken those men called "Elders" by the seat of the trousers and thrown them out of the oversight of Christ's church.

It is a fair observation that people will generally tolerate the most outspoken ministry from a pulpit so long as it doesn't actually get down to "floor level" and demands to be applied as well as applauded. But such an attitude is contrary to the total purpose of God's word given to us.

The Word of God is the Church's only rule of faith *and practice*. It is given to us not only to bring us *to* faith, but to keep us *in* the faith. We live in a day when it might be reasonably demonstrated that a good many professed evangelical churches could exist quite independently from the Bible! Oh, the Bible is required in *some* ways, and for *some* things; it is required in order to have the public reading of the Scriptures, it is required to provide some suitable "text" for the preacher to base a sermon on, it is required to create the general tone that the church is "Biblical" and "holds to the truth," it is required for the bolstering of some dearly-held traditional viewpoint or position. But when it comes to attempting to actually understand, or implement, or apply the Biblical principles of conduct in our churches, in so many cases, these seem to be either simply ignored or openly disregarded.

Well, none of that is in keeping with the thrust of the 119th Psalm, nor with that vital second part of the psalm made mention of. How it would become us all to read it, and re-read it, again and again. To return

to it and never rest from it until we know more and more of the psalmist's resolve, to not only *know* the Word of the Lord, but to do it: "I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy *ways*."

Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton.



***Mrs Seaton's Letter
To
The Boys and Girls***

Dear Boys and Girls,

"In the beginning God" These are the very first words that we read in the Bible, because in the beginning there was nothing except God. There were no mountains or rivers, no animals or insects, no men and women, or girls and boys. There was nothing, nothing at all, except God. As we look around us, boys and girls, we see such marvellous wonders of living creatures, don't we? I was reading about one recently called a "digger wasp." I wonder if any of you have even seen one? They are quite common in any piece of dry, sandy ground. They have very thin bodies, usually black in colour with bands or spots of red or yellow. Here is what a book I read said about them:

"Instead of building a nest, digger wasps make a hole, usually in the ground, to put their eggs and grubs in. Before laying her eggs, a female digger wasp goes off to look for a caterpillar. Having found one, she paralyses it with her sting. The wasp drags the caterpillar to the hole she has dug, drops it in, lays an egg on it, then seals up the hole. Later on, a wasp grub hatches out from the egg, feeds on the caterpillar and soon grows into an adult digger was which then lays eggs itself on another caterpillar."

The interesting thing, boys and girls, is that the digger wasp has never seen another was going through all this complicated preparation for egg-laying. Nor will she see her baby wasp eat the caterpillar for food. For, remember, she seals up the hole after she drops the egg on the top of the caterpillar. The digger wasp does all this “automatically” without any thought. We usually say that such things are done “by instinct,” and by this we mean that the insect was born with this kind of behaviour already laid down in its brain.

But I trust you all know, boys and girls, who gives the animals and insects, too, like the digger wasp, that “instinct.” It is God, of course, who has created all things. The Bible says, “and God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And this little digger wasp is only one of the millions and millions of creatures and things all over the world that God has created.

“All things bright and beautiful – All creatures great and small;
All things wise and wonderful – The Lord God made them all.”

Love,
Mrs Seaton.



Gleanings in the Psalms ***(Psalm 91 (concluded))***

Verse 4. “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. ...” Christ’s wings are both for healing and for hiding; for curing and securing us. The devil and his instruments would soon devour the servants of God if He did not set an invisible guard about them and cover them with the golden feathers of His protection.

Thomas Watson

Verse 9. “Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation.” The psalmist in these verses assures the man who dwells in God that he shall be secure. **Though faith claims no merit of its own, yet the Lord rewards it wherever he sees it.** He who makes God his refuge shall find him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. The “dwelling” here intended by the original was only a tent, yet the frail covering would prove to be a sufficient shelter from harm of all sorts. It matters little whether our abode be a gipsy’s hut or a monarch’s palace if the soul has made the Most High its habitation. Get into God and you dwell in all good, and ill is banished far away. It is not because we are perfectly or highly esteemed among men that we can hope for shelter in the day of evil, but because our refuge is the eternal God, and our faith has learned to hide beneath his sheltering wing.

Spurgeon.

Verses 9-10. “Because thou hast made (etc.) There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come near thy dwelling.” There is a threefold preservation that the Church and the members of it may look for from divine providence: a preservation from, a preservation in, and a preservation by, “dangers.”

(1st). A preservation from dangers – according to the promise of this psalm, “Because thou hast made ... there shall no evil befall thee.” On one occasion when Austin was going to preach in a certain town, some of his enemies waited by the roadside to kill him. Those who had come to guide him to the town lost their way eventually only arrived in the town by another route. Through this apparent “accident,” Austin was able to preach in the town, much good was done for men’s soul, honour brought to God and frustration to His enemies as He had kept His servant “from” the dangers.

(2nd). A preservation in dangers - as the widow of Serepta’s store was made to hold out *in* the time of famine – as the providence of God was with Daniel *in* the lion’s den, and with the men *in* the fiery furnace. The church has always been “a lily among thorns.” This bush is far from consumption, although it has seldom or never been out of the fire.

(3rd). A preservation by dangers. That is, there is a preservation from greater evils by lesser evils. There is poison but providence doesn’t

know how to make an antidote by it. So, Jonah was swallowed by a whale, and by that danger kept alive, and Joseph by being cast into a pit and sold into Egypt, became a nursing father for the church. Faith is endangered by security, but secure in the midst of danger. God preserves us – not like we would preserve fruits, in sugar, to keep them for a year; but like meat for a long voyage, in salt, because our heavenly Father is resolved to keep us for ever – from dangers, in dangers, and by dangers themselves. Paul’s thorn in the flesh, which had much of danger and trouble in it, was given him on purpose to prevent pride, which was a greater evil.

From John Arrowsmith (1602-1659)

Verses 11-12. “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” The verses which the devil took up in his temptings of Christ in the wilderness, and which he, in fact, misquoted for his own purposes by leaving out the “conditional” phrase – “to keep thee in all thy ways.” The divine pleasure of God was upon His Son who had come to do all the Father’s will and to walk in all the “ways” that God had mapped out for Him. It was from those very ways that the devil now sought to turn Him by tempting Him to presume on the goodness of God while turning from those ways. The most glaring omission, however, is seen in the devil’s failure to complete the total context of the psalm in the next verse – verse 13: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.” The one truth that Satan, who is that old dragon, and the roaring lion, and the serpent of Eden, couldn’t abide was the thought that the woman’s seed had come to tread upon him and trample him under His feet. But we may praise the Lord that our Lord Jesus perfectly kept to all His ways – that He set His face steadfast as a flint to go to Jerusalem, and by the cross pinned Satan to the ground.

"Blessed is the man That Endureth Temptation." James 1:12.

Satan, in tempting, observes the flow of our temperament and constitution at a given time; he makes the wind and the tide go together, whichever way the natural tide of the heart is running, that is the way that the winds of his temptation will blow.

Satan tempts to evil at times by them that are good; thus, he gives poison in a golden cup. He tempted Christ by Peter, Peter would dissuade Him from suffering: Master, pity Thyself. Who would have thought to have found the tempter in the mouth of an apostle.

If Adam in a few hours sinned himself out of Paradise, how soon would we sin ourselves into hell, if we were not kept by a greater power than our own! But God puts underneath us His everlasting arms.

Christian, canst thou not believe that that evil which is in thine heart, and which will break forth suddenly, if God should leave you? If God leaves a man to himself, how suddenly and scandalously may sin break forth in the holiest of men on the earth. "I say unto all, Watch!" A wandering heart needs a watchful eye.

If you would not be overcome by temptation, be humble in your own eyes. They are nearest falling who presume on their own strength. The doves, says Pliny, take pride in their high flying, till at last they fly so high, that they become a pray to the hawk. So, when men fly high in pride and self-confidence, they become a prey to the tempter.

Satan doth not tempt God's children because they have sin in them, but because they have grace in them. Had they no grace he would not disturb them, for where he keeps possession, all his goods are at peace. A thief will not assault an empty house but where he thinks there is treasure, there he will strike. Though to be tempted is a trouble, yet to think why you are tempted is a great comfort.

(From Thomas Watson)

The Things Contained in Scripture, And drawn from It.

Things contained in Scripture and drawn from it are called.

- (1) ***God's Law*** - because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign.
- (2) ***His Way*** - because they are the rule both of his providence and our obedience.
- (3) ***His Testimonies*** - because they are solemnly declared to the world and attested beyond contradiction.
- (4) ***His Commandments*** - because given with authority and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust.
- (5) ***His Precepts*** - because prescribed to us, and not left as a thing indifferent.
- (6) ***His Word*** - or sayings, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential, eternal Word, all-in-all in it.
- (7) ***His judgments*** - because framed in finite wisdom, and because that by them we must both judge and be judged.
- (8) ***His Righteousness*** - because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness.
- (9) ***His Statutes*** - because they are fixed and determined and of perpetual obligation.
- (10) ***His Truth*** - or faithfulness because the principles upon which divine law is built are eternal truths.

Matthew Henry.

Chief Characteristics of the Psalms

The chief characteristics of the Psalms, in addition to their intense national expression, are their deep spiritual feeling, keen sense of individual sinfulness in the sight of God, a recognition of his greatness, and a conviction of his pardoning mercies.

There is also a distinct apprehension of the promise and coming of the Messiah, and many prophetic declarations of his mission, sufferings,

and death. And whilst these features are visible in nearly all of them, they are most clear in those which are ascribed to and acknowledged to be by David. Hence the Book Psalms has been adopted by the Church as a most precious possession, and its language has been taken up as the vehicle of its prayer and praise. In the various experiences of a Christian's life he can at all times turn to this Book and draw from its sacred outpouring materials of hope and comfort and consolation, coupled with touching lessons in submission to the Divine will.

No portion of Sacred Scripture is so frequently referred to, and quoted from, in the New Testament. No other portion is so readily used with direct reference to the Messiah. Nearly one half of all the quotations referring to Christ in the Old Testament are taken from the Psalter. Our Lord himself, in his dying agony upon the cross, adopted and repeated as his own, the first verse of the 22nd psalm – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

“To render thanks unto the Lord,
It is a comely thing,
And to thy name, O thou most High,
Due praise aloud to sing.”