

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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Index

1. Providence and Perseverance – W. J. Seaton. (October 1982)
2. Special helps and Rules Against Satan's Devices. (continued from last edition)
3. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 96.
4. The Strange Highland Church of the Sea. Strontian, Argyll-Shire, Scotland.
5. Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls. Mary Jones and her Lantern.
6. The Hands of the Living God.



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 N. Needham, W. J. Seaton and Pastor G. S. Marley
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Audio Archive of Sermons from 1970 to 2002.

Providence & Perseverance

By

W.J. Seaton (1982)

Dear Friends,

Psalm 119 and verse 100, set before us two very vital Biblical principles that we ought to appreciate and appropriate. Here is the verse: "I understand more than the ancients," says David, "because I kept they precepts." There are two very meaningful points there: the one which has to do with God's Providences towards us, the other which has to do with our perseverance in the things of our God.

"I understand more than the ancients," says David, in the first place. And when the Lord's servant makes that statement, he is not boasting of anything that he has within himself. He is simply referring to a fact of history, or a fact of God's Providence towards him that has placed him *further on*, as you might say, in the ongoing revelation of God's eternal truth towards men and women.

David stood at that point of God's revelation, for example where the promise that God made to Abraham about his seed inheriting a land of blessing had now come to be fulfilled. He didn't have to speculate about what God had meant, in the first place, in that promise. He did not have to speculate about what God had meant, in the first place, in that promise. The children of Israel had spent their period of time in the "strange land" of Egypt that God had spoken about, and God had now brought them out of that land "flowing with milk and honey." All that was past; it was no longer in prospect, as it had been for some of those "ancients," and so, David can say, in that very definite sense, "I understand mor than the ancients." God's providence and purpose had set him at a later stage of His revealed words and ways and David was able, indeed, to "understand more than the ancients."

Now that Providential placing by God of His people is still in operation for us. Every bit as much as David, and more, we stand at that vantage point of God's purposes where we can say, "I understand more than the ancients." Not only more than those "ancients" who went before David, but more than David himself, and more than those "ancients" who were to come after him. There was nothing arrogant in such a thought under God; but there is a great blessing and great guidance where we come to realise this Providential fact of God in our lives.

The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, makes some reference to the case, when he speaks about the difference in *status* and *stature* between the Church in the Old Testament scriptures of God and the Church in the New. In the Old, in fact, the Church occupied the status of a child. It was, indeed, "the heir of all things," but, as yet, it had not come fully into its inheritance. That "child" was "under tutors and governors, until the time appointed by the father," "But when the fulness of time was come, god sent forth his son ... that we might receive the adoption of sons." At the coming of Christ, the Church's status underwent a radical change; it "come of age." It moved out of its "rudimentary" things of its "non-age," and it took on the things of maturity and its full-grown *stature*, in Jesus Christ our Lord. No longer is it the child indiffering little in many ways from the servant, because "under tutors and governors," but now, it is the full-grown son; now that God's "fulness of time" has arrived."

It is like two photographs hanging side-by-side in a house: the one of the young man of the house as he now is, the other when he was three, or four, or five years old. They are not two different people in those photographs, but the one person at two very different points of existence. The Old Testament "photograph" of the Church is that of a "child;" the New is that of a "full-grown man." It doesn't mean that any Christian today is superior in faith, and love, and zeal, and encourage to many of those Old Testament saints of the past. Indeed, no; as John Calvin states it, with regards to those kinds of things, "we are the children, and they are the giants." But, as far as the fulness of the revelation of god is concerned, we are the "fathers," and they are the

children. We "understand more than the ancients," if we belong to the people of God today. We stand at the place called Golgotha, and from that vantage point we "view the landscape o'er." We see in *fact* what the "ancients" were only able to see in *figure*. It is not a mere "lamb" that we see in Abel's sacrifice; it is not a mere vessel that we see in Noah's ark; it is not a mere land that we see in the land of Canaan. It is that "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," that is reserved for us through "Christ our passover" who has been sacrificed for us. That's what it means for us to have more understanding than the "ancients." God has providentially set us in the blaze of New Testament light, and in the light of that light we are able to say, "I understand mor than the ancients."

Such is the first principle bound-up in David's short statemen in his psalm, and it has very practical application for us as the people of God today. Too often we find Christians walking in the half-light of that which is "past" and failing to come into the clearness and the clarity of the "Sun of Righteousness" who has risen for us. We find it in some people's understanding of the very nature of the Church of Jesus Christ itself. We find it with regards to the mode of worship and the means of working within the Church. We find it with the distinctive kinds of buildings, and distinguished kinds of dress, which smack more of the Temple and Aaron than they do of the New Testament church and its minister. We find it in the interpretations of prophecies and in the implementation of practicalities in the Christian life. We find it with regards to the very identity of the people of God themselves as "the Israel of God," and God's "chosen generation," and "royal priesthood," and "holy nation," and "peculiar people." In so many ways the Church has failed to "walk in the light as Christ is in the light." Perhaps some people have unconsciously applied the maxim that the "old is better." That is so true in so many ways and it would well-become us in our day to seek out many of the "old paths" and walk in them. But, with regards to the Word of God it is not a question of what is Old, and what is New, but of what is "part" and what is "full."

"The New is in the Old concealed,
The Old is by the New revealed."

And what we are duty-bound to do is to live, and think, and act, in the fulness of the revelation of God that God has given to us. We *do* have more understanding than the ancients; and God forbid that we should fail to appreciate and appropriate that fact of Providence in our lives. God has granted us such a place in His own scheme of things, and we are called to appreciate and appropriate that fact. As we do, then we will find that self-same light of the Word of God shining more and more unto a perfect day.

Note the second part of David's verse; "I understand more than the ancients," he says, "*because* I keep they precepts."

Now, that is the other principle contained in David's words; the one that has to do with our perseverance in the things of God. David had been "providentially" placed at that point in God's revelation and history where he might understand more than the ancients ever understood. But that understanding was not necessarily automatic. "I understand more than the ancients," he says, "*because* I keep they precepts." There was a certain principle of process at work, and it was that principle that the Saviour Himself enunciated time and time again, namely, that if we do the things that we know, then He will cause us to know more things for us to do!

You remember, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." As He puts it in another place – "... with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given." "If ye know these things," He tells the disciples in the upper room, "happy are ye if ye do them."

The fact that church of this New Testament era has been providentially placed in the fulness of the light of God's revelation in Christ isn't a fact without implication or application to our souls. We have been granted the light in order to walk in that light, and as we walk in that light, then we will come to enjoy the benefits and the blessings of that light more and more. "I understand more than the ancients," says David; blessed providential placing for him. But, "I understand more

than the ancients, *because* I keep thy precepts;" blessed persevering that performed what he knew, in order to know more to perform.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton (1982)

***Special Helps and Rules
Against Satan's Devices***

***Adapted from
Thomas Brooks***

Continued from Wicket Gate edition 162 (July/August 2023)

The Sixth Help.

If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***keep humble***. Humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and snares of his spreading. The devil has least power to fasten a temptation on him that is most humble. God has said that "He will ***teach*** the humble," and that "He will dwell with the humble," and that "He will dwell with the humble," and the "He will fill and satisfy the humble." And if the teachings of God, and the in-dwellings of God and the in-pouring of God, will not keep the soul from falling into Satan's snares, I do not know what will. And therefore, if you would be happy in resisting Satan, and blessed in triumphing over Satan and all his snares, keep humble; I say again, keep humble.

The Seventh Help.

If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***keep a strong, close and constant watch***. That soul that will not watch against temptations, will certainly fall before the power of the temptations. Satan works most strongly on the fancy when the soul is drowsy. The soul's security is Satan's opportunity to fall upon the soul and spoil the soul. Satan always keeps a crafty and malicious watch, "seeking whom he may devour." Shall Satan keep a crafty watch, and shall not Christians keep a holy spiritual watch? Our whole life is beset with temptations. Satan watches all opportunities to break our peace, to wound our conscience, to lessen our comforts, to impair our graces, to slur our evidence, and to damp our assurances. What need have we,

then, to be always upon our watch-tower, lest we be surprised by this subtle serpent.

The Eighth Help.

If you would not be taken with any of Satan's snares and devices, then ***keep up your communion with God.*** A soul high in communion with God may be tempted, but will not easily be conquered. Your strength to stand, and withstand, Satan's fiery darts, is from your communion with God. Communion is Jacob's ladder, where you have Christ sweetly coming down into the soul, and the soul, by divine influences, sweetly ascending up to Christ. So long as your communion with God is kept up, you will be too hard for "spiritual wickedness in high places;" but if you fall from your communion with God, you will fall before the face of every temptation. Job keeps up his communion with God, and conquers Satan upon the dunghill; Adam loses his communion with God, and is conquered by Satan in paradise. Communion with God is a shield upon land, as well as an anchor at sea. It is a sword to defend you, as well as a staff to support you. Therefore keep up your communion with God.

The Ninth Help.

If you would not be taken in any of Satan's devices, then ***engage not against Satan in your own strength.*** Be every day drawing new virtue and strength from the Lord Jesus. Certainly that soul that engages against any old or new temptation without ***new*** strength, ***new*** influences from on high, will fall before the power of the temptation. Ah, souls! When the snare is spread, look up to Jesus Christ, who is lifted up in the gospel, as the brazen serpent was in the wilderness, and say to Him – Dear Lord, here is a new snare laid to catch my soul, and I know that grace formerly received, without fresh supplies from Thy blessed bosom, will not deliver me from this snare. Oh, give me ***new*** strength, ***new*** power, ***new*** influences, new measures of grace, so that I may escape the snares.

The Tenth Help.

If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then ***be much in prayer.*** Prayer is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to the devil. You must watch and pray, and pray and watch, if you

would not enter into temptation. David had many snares laid for him, but this puts him to prayer: - "The proud have hid a snare for me," he says, "and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah. (Pause and consider.) I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplication, O Lord!" (Psalm 140 verses 5 and 6.) Ah, souls! Take words to yourselves, and go to God. Tell God that Satan has spread his snares in all places for you; tell God that he digs deep, and that he has plot upon plot, and device upon device. Tell God that you have neither skill nor power to escape his snares; tell God that it is a work too high and too hard for any created creature to work your own deliverance, unless, He puts under you His everlasting arms. Tell God of the love of Christ, of the blood of Christ, and of the intercession of Christ for you, so that a way may be found for your escape. Tell God that if He will make it His hour to save you from falling into Satan's snares, you will make it your glory and business to speak of His everlasting goodness, and to live out His goodness in your life.

There is nothing that renders plots fruitless like prayer; therefore saith Christ "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matthew 26 verse 41).



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 96

Subject. - this Psalm is evidently taken from that sacred song which was composed by David at the time when "the ark of God was set in the midst of the tent which David had prepared for it .." See the sixteenth chapter of the first book of the Chronicles.

The **former** part of that song is probably omitted in this place because it referred to Israel, and the design of the Holy Ghost in this Psalm is to

give forth a song for the Gentiles, a triumphant hymn wherewith to celebrate the conversion of the nations to Jehovah in gospel times. It follows fitly upon the last Psalm which describes the obstinancy of Israel, and the consequent taking of the gospel from them that it might be preached among the nations who would receive it, and in due time be fully won to Christ by His power.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon

Verse 1. "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth." "A *new* song," unknow to you before. Come, all ye nations of the wide earth, who, up to this hour have been giving your worship to dead gods that are no gods at all. Come and give your hearts to the true and only God in this *new* song.

Henry Cowles

Verse 1. "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth." "A new song;" for here are set forth those expectations strange to the Jewish creed of former days. - God's intention that "the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise," – begins to dawn upon the exclusive nation.

Jennings and Lowe

Verse 3. "Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." *His wonders.* What a wonderful person he is, for he is God manifest in the flesh; what wonderful love he has shown in his incarnation, obedience, suffering, and death; what amazing miracles he wrought, and what a wonderful work he performed – the work of our redemption, the wonder of men and angels. **Declare** his wonderful resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, his sitting at the right hand of God, and his intercession for his people. **Declare** the wonderful effusion of his Spirit, the conquests of his grace, the enlargement of his kingdom in the world, and also what wonders will be wrought by him when he appears a second time – how the dead will be raised, and all will be judged.

John Gill

Verse 8. "Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name ..." It is a debt, and a debt, in equity must be paid. The glory and honour due to his name is to acknowledge him to be holy, just true, powerful. ... Defraud not his name of the least honour.

Adam Clarke

Verse 9. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth." False worship consists in, the obscurity of ignorance, the dullness of formalism, the offensiveness of indulged sin, the hideousness of hypocrisy. True worship consists in "the beauty of holiness."

C. D.

Verse 10. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. ..." This clause reads in the old Latin version, "Tell it among the heathen that the Lord reigneth *from the tree*." Justin Martyr accuses the Jews of erasing the words "from the tree." A hymn writer renders the verse thus: -

"The truth that David learned to sing,
Its deep fulfilment here attains;
'Tell all the earth the Lord is King!'
Lo, from the cross, a King he reigns!"

From P. Schaff

Verse 13. "... for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." "He cometh;" not, he shall come, but "he cometh." This is to show how near the time of judgment is. It is almost day-break, and the Court is ready to sit: "The Judge standeth at the door."

Thomas Watson

Verse 13. "... for he cometh, for he cometh to judge ..." It has been remarked that "to judge" is the word used instead of "to reign," because "judges" in the early days of the Holy Land exercised the power both of kings and magistrates. The Lord come to be a wiser judge than Samuel, a greater champion than Samson, a mightier deliverer than Gideon.

C. H. S.

The Floating Church Strontian Argyll-Shire

In these days when it is often difficult for new congregations to obtain a permanent place of worship it should always do us good to remember that our present situation is far from unique in the history of Christ's Church and that the scope of our abilities and ingenuity has, perhaps, not yet been stretched to the full.

In the "Annals of the Disruption," published some years after the succession of the "Free Kirk" from the Established Church of Scotland in 1843, numerous incidents of ingenuity, sacrifice, and adaptability are recorded as time and again the new "Free" congregations were refused land on which to erect their own places of worship, or even refusal to build. The following account of "The Floating Church" at Strontian in Argyll-shire, however, must rank high among the most unique of the ventures of that trying and testing time.

"The whole district of Ardnamurchan was the property of Sir James Riddell, extending over an area of forty miles in length. Many of the people joined the Free Church, and forwarded a respectful petition, asking for sites. His reply was a refusal, and the people of Strontian had to meet – which they did to the number of about 500 – in the open air. At communion season, and at other times, Mr. MacLean of Tobermory held services on the hillside, often in severe weather, and sometimes when the congregation 'was very wet.' Mr McRae of Knockbain, has preached to them with snow on the ground, and when 'it was laying snow'"

The refusal of sites by the proprietor of 40 miles of landed estates was a serious matter, but men at that time were not easily baffled. A Floating Church was proposed, which might be anchored in some sheltered bay near the beach, and give accommodation to the people until better days came round. The idea was eagerly taken up, subscriptions were raised,

plans carefully drawn out, the vessel was contracted for at an expense of £1400, and much interest was felt as her construction went on in one of the building yards of the Clyde, under the skilful superintendence of Robert Brown, Esq. Of Fairlie. Then came the launch, and the voyage from Greenock to Loch Sunart. At first there was some difficulty as to a proper anchorage for the vessel ... The best place, safest for the ship and most convenient for the people, would have been just under the windows of Sir James Riddell's Mansion, but, as a matter of good taste, another was chosen two miles off, and there, at a point about 150 yards from the shore, the vessel was safely moored.



“How gladly the people left the storm-beaten hillside for this strange Highland Church of the sea, need not be said. It was a singular spectacle on each returning Sabbath morning, as the hour of public worship drew near, to see the boats coasting along from North and South, each with its contingent of hearers, while numerous groups could be descried far inland, wending their way down from the hills to where the floating church lay moored. Men speak of it as a stirring scene, when ropes and cables were run out from the beach, and the boats were rapidly passed backwards and forwards, conveying the worshippers on board. In winter, the hearers came from a distance of eight or nine miles, and in summer from a still wider circuit. In rough weather it was no slight undertaking to get so many people on board. Even in summer, when all was calm, it was a tedious operation, and not infrequently darkness was settling in before all were again on shore. The numbers who assembled depended on the reputation of the Minister expected to preach, and the people had their own way of testing the esteem in which the different clergymen were held. It was found that, for every hundred hearers, the vessel sank an inch in the water; nothing, therefore, could be easier than to keep the register. They could

tell to an inch the popularity of every minister who came. A depression of six inches told that a congregation of six hundred had been drawn together, and on some occasions it is said that this number was exceeded.”

In this respect, Dr Beith of Stirling, seems to have been one of the most notable preachers to have crossed over the waters of Loch Sunart to preach on the iron church; “I was thanked by the office-bearers,” he tells us in the Annals, “and told that their church had never been so deep down in the water before.” It is also from Dr Beith that we learn that the actual amount raised by the people for the building of the church actually came to the sum of £2000, although the church only cost £1400. Like the children of Israel building their Tabernacle in the wilderness they brought more than the Lord required so that He had to restrain their giving. But, it should be appreciated that the sum of £2000, in the eighteen forties is comparable to something like £60,000 by our rates today (1972) for the average wage of those days was little more than 10/- (50p) a week. But the Lord’s people required a House wherein the Lord’s honour might dwell, and their hearts were bent in that direction. There was no elaboration in design; functionality appears to have been the keynote according to the ship’s description, also given by the same Dr Beith.

“The huge hulk, constructed of iron, was built, fitted up with pulpit and benches, small vestry etc., and successfully towed from the Clyde round the Mull of Kintyre by one or two tug-steamers, and in the end safely moored in the appointed place ... As a place of worship the accommodations was very comfortable. The pulpit stood at the bow – under cover of course – having the vestry at one side. The entrance for the congregation was towards the stern; that for the minister near the bow. A passage on one side, running the whole length of the church, afforded access to the benches, which were ranged straight across ship throughout her whole length, and occupied the entire breadth, excepting what was required for the passage. About 750 hearers could be comfortably accommodated.”

And so the worship continued, until ... and here is the most glorious episode of all the church's life, for, they who honour the Lord, He will honour. One night a violent storm struck the shores of Loch Sunart, bringing havoc in its wake to the surrounding countryside. The home of Sir James Riddell was badly damaged in the storm, and when the further consequences of the winds were later related to him he became a changed man with changed views towards the people of the Free church who had also gone on to serve the Lord, none daring to make them afraid. For the storm that had blasted the unsympathetic Laird's Mansion had also blown the iron church from her moorings and had hurled her on to the shores of the Loch; but in such a way that the Lord's hand in that night's transactions could in no way be denied. For one thing, the church had been set – and firmly wedged between two great rocks on the shore. It is said that a spirit level later revealed a perfect reading both horizontally and vertically. On top of that, however, it was discovered that the church had settled – due to the nature of the winds that night – on that part of the shore between high tide and low which is designated in Scotland as “no man's land,” thereby preventing the Laird's intervention, even if he was in a mind to do so. This was not the case, however, and at a future date, land was granted, and the people moved from what was now their church on the shore to one on the land.

Of a truth, the Lord will build His church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Mary Jones and Her Broken Lantern

(Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls.)

Dear Boys and Girls,

It was just getting dark and was already windy and raining. The hens were beginning to roost, but one difficult hen still picked away at bits of corn on the grass and kept well away from the henhouse. "Shoo, Shoo," cried the little bare foot girl, "you know it's time to go to roost; and I'm in a hurry – shoo!" With a loud squawk, the hen scuttled round the back of the henhouse and wouldn't come out. "Well, stay there! I'll

go and fetch the lantern while you make up your mind," said the girl.

She then went to a tidy tool-shed, but on taking the lantern down found that the catch was broken. Dear me, every is going wrong tonight when I am in such a rush," she said; "now hurry up little hen or I'll lock you out for the night!" At last she got the hen into the henhouse and then fastened the door. "Now, what can be done about the lantern" she puzzled. She then ran out of the gate and a little way down the hill until she came to a little farm cottage. "Mr Williams, would you kindly lend me your lantern tonight? The latch of ours is broken." "Why, it's Mary Jones" said the man, of course you can have the lantern. I suppose you are going off to the meeting tonight." Mary quickly go the lantern from Mr Williams, and raced off home.

"Where have you been, child?" Her mother asked her when she got back, "we certainly shall be late tonight." When Mary explained about the hen and the lantern her mother said, "We could have done without the lantern". "Yes, but then I could not have come with you,! Said Mary, "for the people would have said that there was no need for me to come if I had no lantern to hold for you, and I do want to be at the meeting and hear all I can from God's Word; I do wish I had a Bible of my own." With these words on her lips, this little eight-year old girl went off to the meeting with her mother.

Well, boys and girls, I wonder do you go off to church, or Sunday school, or Bible Class with the same eagerness as this little girl. She was hungry to know more and more from God's word, and her great desire was to have a Bible of her own. She eventually got one, but not before she had many adventures and had overcome many obstacles.

You can read the rest of her story in a book called, "Mary Jones and her Bible". I hope some of you, if not all, think it worthwhile to read the book. In the meantime, learn a lesson from Mary, and seek out and study the Bible. Remember the words of he psalm, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path".

Love,
Mrs Seaton.

The Hands of the Living God.

It must be a fearful thing for impenitent sinners to fall into the hands of the Living God, when we remember the character of God as revealed in His judgments of old. Taking the Scriptures as our guide, we see in them a revelation of God differing very widely from that which is so current now-a-days. Let me remind you that ever since the day when Adam fell, the whole of the human race, with but two exceptions, have been subjected to the pains of sickness and death. If you would behold the severity of the God who judges all the earth, you have only to remember that this whole world has been for ages a vast burying-place.

Men whine out their abhorrence of God's justice, and scout the idea of future punishment with the question – "Would a father do thus and thus with his children?" The question needs no other reply than fact: all men die! When a father suffer his children to pine in sickness and die, when it was in his power to prevent it?

Since then, the great God evidently permits such pain, and even death to happen to his creatures, he is evidently not father merely, but something more.

To ungodly men Jehovah reveals himself in the light of a judge: and a judge, too, whose stern severity has brought to pass the death sentence for all men and women. This is our God of love. But not the newly-devised God who is love and love alone.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon