

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 165 issued January 2024

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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine [www.wicketgate.co.uk](http://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
- Archive of Audio Sermons.

# ***Balancing Biblical Teaching within the Church of Christ Jesus***



Dear Friends,

This is the age of what you might call the specialized Christian meeting. Quite apart from the longer-standing categories of meetings for women, and meetings for young people, and meetings for children, etc., we now have a whole array of gatherings convened to meet the “special” needs of the particular group of Christians involved. Not only, it seems, does a person *become* a Christian at some point in their life, but they also *cease to be* something else; and what they *once were*, has to be taken into consideration with what they *now are* in company with others. Hence, we have specialized meetings for ex-catholics, ex-jews, ex-convicts, etc., as well as specialized meetings for housewives, graduates, singles, preachers and teachers – and what have you. Find your classification as a Christian, and chances are some one or other will have formed a circle that caters for the peculiarities of those within that classification.

Now, without entering into the necessary rights or wrongs, benefits or otherwise, of such a situation, it is important that we don’t overlook the fact that there is a very positive arrangement revealed for *all* Christians together on the pages of the New Testament scriptures of God. In other words, in pursuing that which we might imagine to be “expedient,” let us not neglect that which is Biblical, and Biblically arranged for *all* Christians and for *each* Christian, as we stand together in the Lord. On numerous occasions in the New Testament, we find the writer exhorting the believers in Christ to “bear one another’s burdens,” or to “pray for one another,” or to “comfort one another” in the Lord, and so forth. These exhortations are not made in a vacuum, but they are delivered on the back of information already given regarding various Christians and all Christians within their given spheres of life and calling.

For example, if you read the epistle to the Ephesians you come across those tremendous words of exhortation and directive that are given to Christian wives, and Christian husbands; and to children and parents, and masters and servants, etc. *Each* is exhorted with regards to the obligations and peculiarities of their calling; but each is exhorted in the hearing of *all*. That is, when that epistle to the Ephesians was read out, it was read out in the presence of the whole church at Ephesus gathered together. That was the practice; and it was probably the “universal” practice with all the epistles that had gone into circulation from the hands of the apostles, under the Holy Spirit of God. That’s why you find Peter remarking about some of the things that Paul had written “in all his epistles;” that’s why you find Paul telling the Colossians – “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye like-wise read the epistle from Laodicea. (Colossians 4:16).

The Pattern is clear: each epistle to each church was read in the hearing of the whole church; and also, many of the epistles “circulated” among the churches, and these too, would have been heard by all as they were read and explained in their midst. The exhortation to each; to each category, group, or calling, were heard by all – by all outwith that particular category or group. But it is that which is the grand arrangement of the Word of God for us in whichever group or category we may be placed. Those portions relating to wives are not to be read at a wives meeting in Ephesus; those parts concerning masters and servants are not to be reserved for a gathering of Christian business men, or a believer’s trades union. They are to be read to the whole church, and heard by the whole church; that is God’s way for the Church, first and foremost.

Now, the practicalities of that Biblical arrangement are immense, and they are all part and parcel of those exhortations about “bearing one another’s burdens,” and “praying for one another,” and so forth. The apostle Paul wants *all* the Christians in the church to know what *each* Christian in the church must endeavour to follow in their own particular sphere of life. Therefore, he outlines the obligations etc., of each in

their calling, so that all might join together in prayer, and in all ways, in assisting each in their calling.

We have often tried to visualise one of those gatherings of the church in New Testament days – say, the church at Ephesus. Along comes two great exhortative words of chapter 5:22 – “**Wives**, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, “and so forth. Can’t you just see the dear old husbands in the congregation just growing an inch or two taller at that authoritative word that is being delivered into their hands! “That’s the boy, Paul; you tell them who’s boss.” All very well; but then, with one fell swoop, comes that levelling word a few lines further on in the reading – “**Husbands**, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

And so throughout. *Oh*, yes – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord;” but, “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters,” but, “Masters, do the same things unto them.” And as *all* hear of *each*, then there is being laid the foundation of *all* caring for each, and praying for each, as all come to realise the peculiarities of each within their place and within their calling.

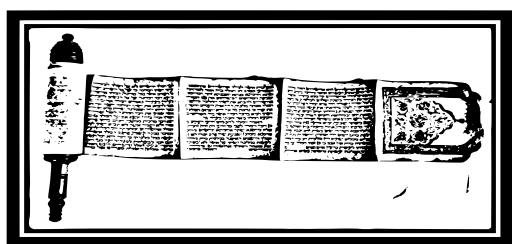
It’s not always easy for a wife to be in submission to her own husband, especially when he happens to be stomping about like a bear with a sore head. It’s not always easy for a husband to love his wife, especially if the fur is sitting up on her back and her fangs are out. It’s not always easy for children to obey their parents, especially when their parents are acting in total unreasonableness. It’s not always easy for parents to keep cool, especially when their children act like the sons and daughters of Adam’s race that they are.

Run right through all the exhortations that apply to all the various categories that each of us fits into in the life of faith, and you will find that there are many areas that are not easy. But, isn’t it meant to be a gracious provision and arrangement of the Lord that *all* may know the things that confront *each*, and that each may be assured of the interests

and the prayers of all within the totality of the churches of Christ where the word of God has been delivered?

It is one of those virtual paradoxes of the scriptures that our individual Christian interests are not best-served through individualistic acts or actions, but through corporate unity and unison, within the totality of the churches of Christ. God has certain requirements for “each kind” of Christian; for a Christian wife, and for a Christian husband; for elders, deacons, younger people, older people, widows, singles, masters and servants – and virtually every category of which you can think. All of these categories are seen as part of the whole in meeting those requirements together. It may seem attractive to gather into “peer groups,” and quite likely there can be benefit from such an exercise. But as this becomes more and more the fashion, let us not forget that there is an already existing Biblical arrangement to help each group to live as unto the Lord, and that is set on the grounds of mutuality so constantly summed up in that great New Testament phrase – “one of another.”

May the Lord help us all,  
W. J. Seaton (1982)



### ***The Testimonies of the Lord***

The scriptures are called testimonies in respect of God himself, because they give testimony to Him.

There is not a book of scripture but does testify of God and his attributes. In the book of Genesis, we have a testimony of his **power** in making the world, of his **justice** in drowning it, and of his **goodness** in saving it new. In the book of Exodus, we have a testimony of his **providence** in leading Israel out of Egypt, and over the Red Sea, and we have a testimony of his **wisdom** in giving them the Law. What should I name more?

In the New Testament – in the gospel – all is testimony. As the Old gave testimony to God, so the New to God in Christ. “To him gave all the prophets witness.” “These are they which testify of me.”

Everywhere there is testimony to Christ: to his humility, in taking our nature; to his power, in working miracles; to his wisdom, in the parables that he spoke; to his patience and love, in the torments that he suffered for us.

Both Law and Gospel – the whole book of scripture in every part of it, and with regards to these things, is rightly called, “*the testimonies of the Lord*”.

(Richard Holdsworth.)

# Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

It’s always good to have a try at things, and especially to try to serve God with all our hearts as that great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon tells us in these lines that I’ve taken from one of his books for you in this letter .

“Of all the pretty little songs I have ever heard my youngsters sing, that is one of the best which winds up –

‘If at first you don’t succeed,  
Try, try, try again.’

*Can’t do it* sticks in the mud, but *try* soon drags the wagon out of the rut. The fox said **try**, and he got away from the hounds when they almost snapped at him. The bees said **try** and turned flowers into

honey. The squirrel said **try**, and up he went to the top of the beech tree. The snowdrop said **try**, and bloomed in the cold snows of the winter. The sun said **try**, and the spring soon threw Jack Frost out of the saddle. The young lark said **try**, and he found that his new wings took him over the hedges and ditches, and up where his father was singing. The ox said **try**, and ploughed the field from end to end. No hill too steep for try to climb, no clay too stiff for try to plough, no field too wet for try to drain, no hole too big for try to mend.

‘By little strokes  
Men fell great oaks.’

If you want to do good in the world, the little word ‘try’ comes in again. There are plenty of ways of serving God, and some that you cannot preach in a great Church; be content to speak to a boy or a girl at school; very good wheat grows in little fields, You may cook in small pots as well as big ones. Little pigeons can carry great messages.”

The gospel is a great message, boys and girls, so take Mr Spurgeon’s advice and “try” all you can for God.

Mrs Seaton.



## ***Gleanings in the Psalms***

***(Psalm 98)***

**Whole Psalm** – This psalm is an evident prophecy of Christ’s coming to save the world; and what is here *foretold* by David is, in the blessed virgin’s song, chanted forth as being *accomplished*. David is the voice, and Mary is the *echo*.

- David. "O sing unto the Lord a new song."
- Mary. "My soul doth magnify the Lord."
- David. "He hath done marvellous things."
- Mary. "He that is mighty hath done great things."
- David. "With his own right hand and holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory."
- Mary. "He hath showed strength with his arm, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts."
- David. "The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed," etc.
- Mary. "His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation."
- David. "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel."
- Mary. "He hath helpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy."

These parallels are very striking; and it seems as if Mary had this psalm in her eye when she composed her song of triumph.

And this is a farther argument that the whole psalm, whether it record the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, is yet to be ultimately understood of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of the gospel through all the nations of the earth. And taken in this view no language can be too strong, nor poetic imagery too high to point out the unsearchable riches of Christ.

*Adam Clarke*

**Verse 3. "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel ... ."** The psalmist very properly observes that God, in redeeming the world, "remembered his truth" which he had given to Israel; language which implies that He was influenced by no other motive than that of faithfully performing what He had himself promised. To show clearly that the promise was not grounded at all on the merit or righteousness of man, he mentions the "mercy" of God first of all, and then, the faithfulness of God in performing after that. In



short, the cause of salvation was not to be found outwith God himself, but was in His own good pleasure, which had been testified long before to Abraham and his posterity. “He hath remembered his mercy and his truth (spoken) toward the house of Israel ... .”

*John Calvin*

**Verse 3. “He hath remembered his mercy and his truth ... .”** His *mercy* moved Him to make His promise, and His *truth* hath engaged Him to perform it; and He hath been mindful of both, by scattering the blessed influences of His light and bounty over the face of the whole earth, and causing all nations to see and partake of the salvation of God.

*Matthew Hole*

**Verse 5. “Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp and the voice of a psalm.”** With psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned from Babylon. The Lord of psalmists – the Great Son of David – sang psalms with His apostles on the night before He suffered, when He instituted the holy supper of His love. With psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight, when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And after his own example the apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colosse to teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

*J. J. S. Perowne*

**Verses 7-9. “Let the sea roar ... let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth ... .”** Stiller music, such as made the stars twinkle, suited His first coming at Bethlehem; but His second advent calls for trumpets, for He is judge – and for all earth’s acclamations, for He has put on His royal splendour. All things bless His throne, yea, and the very coming of it. As the dawn sets the earth weeping for joy at the rising of the sun, so should the approach of Jesus’s reign make all creation glad.

*C.H. Spurgeon*

***And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. (Luke 24 verses 52 and 53)***

***AMEN.***

One can only conclude that God's professed children are bored with Him, for they must be wooed to meetings with a stick of striped candy in the form of religious movies, games, and refreshments.

It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God: So we have the strange anomaly of orthodoxy in creed and heterodoxy in practice. The striped-candy technique has been so fully integrated into our present religious thinking that it is simply taken for granted. Its victims never dream that it is not part of the teachings of Christ and His apostles.

Any objection to the carryings on of our present golden-calf Christianity is met with the triumphant reply, "But we are winning them!"

And winning them to what?

To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denials? To Separation from the world? To crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To a despising of the world's treasures? To hard self-discipline? To love to God? To total committal to Christ?

Of course the answer to all these questions is *no*.

We are paying a frightful price for our religious boredom. And that at a time of the world's mortal peril.

A. W. Tozer.

## ***Thoughts From Various Brethren.*** ***(Spurgeon, Whitefield, Secker, Arnot.)***

### ***Salvation is of the Lord. (Spurgeon)***

That verse in Psalm 3 and verse 8, contains the sum and substance of Calvinistic doctrine: -

“Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.” Search scripture through and you must, if you read it with a candid mind, be persuaded that the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is the great doctrine of the Word of God. ‘Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.’ This is a point concerning which we are daily fighting. Our opponents say: ‘Salvation belongeth to the free will of man; if not to man’s merit, yet at least to man’s will.’

But, we hold that salvation from first to last, in every iota of it, belongs to the most High God. It is God who chooses His people. He calls them by His grace; He quickens them by His Spirit, and keeps them by His power. It is not of man, neither by man: ‘Not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.’ May we all learn this truth experimentally, for our proud flesh and blood will never permit us to learn it in any other way.

### ***Miracles. (Whitefield)***

What need is there for miracles, now that we see greater miracles every day done by the power of God’s Word.

Do not the spiritually blind now see? Are not the spiritually dead now raised, and the leprous souls now cleansed, and have not the spiritually poor the gospel preached to them? And if we have the thing already, which the miracles were only intended to introduce, why should we tempt god in requiring further signs? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

### ***What’s the Difference? (Arnot)***

It is easy to persuade a papist to lean on priests and saints, on old rags and painted pictures; but it is hard to get a “Protestant” to trust in the living God.

*Light and Life. (Secker)*

How many professors of religion are there who have light enough to know what should be done, but who have not love enough to do what they know. Such people have no advantage from carrying a bright candle in a dark lantern. Give me the professor who perfectly sees the way he should go, and readily goes the way he sees.