

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 37 issued July 2002

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Hearing God's Word — The Pastor's Letter

My Dear Friends,

In the year 1662, two thousand ministers of the Gospel, who were known as Puritans, entered their pulpits for what they believed to be the last time. They had not been able to bring themselves to worship in the way that the law of England then demanded, and for this, they were "ejected" on an August Sunday just over three hundred years ago. What were their thoughts as they faced their last day as ordained ministers of the Word?

Listen to their watchword...

" I preach as never sure to preach again,
And as dying man to dying men".

Circumstances had forced them to realise very vividly one basic fact of the Christian ministry. A minister, or anyone, who stands before men and women to proclaim the message of God's Word, stands before them as a dying man. They must have questioned in their minds as that sad day drew near, "HOW LONG WILL I BE ABLE TO PREACH? But, here is another question, which especially applies to you unconverted people, who are prepared to listen to the preaching of the Gospel from week to week. HOW LONG WILL YOU HEAR? The preacher's voice will one day be silent, and the listener's ears will one day be unable to hear. But, here is the word of warning the listener's ears may be unable to hear long, long before the preacher's voice is silenced!

Listen to the word of one of the world's greatest preachers; his name was Amos - you will find his prophecy in the Old Testament. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord". Oh yes, the voice of Amos would one day be silenced; but the Lord would raise up another prophet, and another, and another. For it wasn't a famine of the PREACHING of the Word that the Lord was going to send, but a famine of the HEARING of the Word. The voice of the Gospel can ring out ever so clearly and yet fall upon hearts and minds and consciences that have been smitten by famine. They are hard and seared, and the life is gone. Is it any wonder that the Bible time and again warns about "being oft reprov'd"? "For, he, being often reprov'd and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be cut off".

How long will I be able to preach? A question that must often come. But "How long will I be able to hear?" should be a question that is often upon a man or woman's lips.

"To the one we are the savour of death unto death;
and to the other the savour of life unto life".

(2nd Cor. 2 verse 16)

Yours sincerely
W.J. Seaton
(February 1967)

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Gleanings in the Psalms - Psalm 2

We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it THE PSALM OF MESSIAH THE PRINCE; for it sets forth, as in a wondrous vision, the TUMULT of the people against the Lord's Anointed; the DETERMINATE PURPOSE of God to exalt His own Son, and the ULTIMATE REIGN of that son over all His enemies.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 1 — "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

In Spain, two monumental pillars were once raised on which were written: - "Diocletian Jovian Augustus, for having extinguished the name of Christians who brought the republic to ruin ... For having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ, and extended the worship of the gods".

As a modern writer has observed: "We have here a monument raised by paganism, over the grave of its vanquished foe. But, in this 'The people imagined a vain thing;' so far from being deceased, Christianity was on the eve of its final and permanent triumph.... Neither in Spain, nor elsewhere can be pointed out the burial place of Christianity".

Joseph Caryl

Verse 1 — "WHY do the heathen rage...?"

Their opposition is altogether unjust, without cause, and reasonless: for, on being asked, they cannot render a reason WHY.

David Dickson

Verse 4 — "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh..."

Those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in His are despicable.

Matthew Henry

Verse 4 — "...shall laugh".

Not that God laughs as men do; but the expression points at the absurdity of men's undertaking of impossibilities.

Martin Luther

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Verse 6 — "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion".

NOTICE ... (1) The Royal office and character of our glorious Redeemer ... He is a KING. (2) The authority by which He reigns... He is MY King. (3) The particular kingdom over which He rules ...MY HOLY HILL OF ZION.

The Temple was built upon Mount Zion and is, therefore, called a HOLY hill. Christ's throne is in His Church, it is His headquarters, and the place at His peculiar residence... Whatever be the plots of hell and earth to the contrary, He reigns by His Father's ordination.

Stephen Charnock

Verse 11 — "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling".

This fear of God qualifies our joy. If you abstract fear from joy, joy will become light and wanton; and if you abstract joy from fear, fear then will become slavish.

William Bates

Verse 11 — "...rejoice with trembling".

Our safety consists in a due proportion of hope and fear. When devoid of hope, we resemble a ship without an anchor; when unrestrained by fear, we are like the same vessel under full sail without ballast.

Thomas Scott

This is another Psalm which divides men into two classes; two classes which will be fully revealed in the day of God's judgment. When the Psalmist considers this day of God's judgment he is forced to ask a question regarding something which seems to have been a source of wonder to him... "WHY do the heathen rage?" This greatly resembles our Lord's question to Paul when he halted him on the road to Damascus... "Saul, Saul, WHY persecutest thou me?" To those who wilfully choose to set themselves against Christ this Psalm should speak with force... In the light of God's coming Day of judgment, WHY do you rage against Him?

The best position for prayer is the position in which we can best pray.

William Arnot

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The Story of Five Boys

Boys and Girls Page

Dear Boys and Girls,

In this edition I'm going to tell you a little story about five little boys.

Once upon a time five little boys went to Sunday School. They were friendly little boys and quite well behaved. They liked the hymns and choruses, and the stories they were told. Then came the time when they were called to put their pennies into the Missionary Box.

The first little boy had plenty of pennies in his pocket. He picked one out, laughing as he did so. He had no thought in his heart about Jesus, or the missionaries, or the poor people who had never heard of Jesus.

Another boy then came up and he too put a penny in the box. As he did so, he looked round at all the other boys and girls, with such a proud look on his face, as though he had done some great thing.

A third boy gave a penny, and as he did so, he muttered to himself: "I suppose I must as all the others are putting in their pennies".

The fourth boy dropped his penny in the box, saying; "I'm so sorry for those poor people in other lands who have no food or clothes as I have". This little boy was full of pity for those people who were not as well off as he was.

Then came the fifth little boy, and, as he gave his penny, he said; "Dear Jesus, take my penny and use it to send somebody to tell these poor people in other lands who have never heard of you that you love them and want to be their Saviour".

Now, which little boy do you think pleased Jesus most with his offering? I think it would be the fifth little boy! Don't you? I hope, boys and girls, as you put your pennies into the Sunday School box you will pray, and think how some missionary might use them in some way to tell other boys and girls about Jesus and His love for them too. Of course, you will never really do this until you know the love of Jesus in your own heart. You see, the fourth little boy was very kind, and what he did in thinking about those not so well off as himself was very good. But, it was only the last little boy - the fifth little boy - that really pleased Jesus, because he was thinking about others coming to know the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour. This is what Jesus really wants us all to do. He wants us to come to know Him ourselves as our own Saviour; and then He wants us to tell others about Him so that He may become their Saviour as well.

Try and remember this, as this is the most important thing in the world.

Mrs Seaton

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— EXCUSES —

Reader,

There are many excuses made about religion. But there are no excuses so poor and feeble as those which people make for NOT PRAYING. Beware of these excuses.

Do not say you DO NOT KNOW HOW TO PRAY. Prayer is the simplest act in all religion. It is simply speaking to God. It needs neither learning nor wisdom, nor book knowledge to begin it. It needs nothing but heart and will. The weakest infant can cry when he is hungry. The poorest beggar can hold out his hand for an alms, and does not wait to find words. The most ignorant man will find something to say to God, if only he has a will.

Do not say you have NO CONVENIENT PLACE TO PRAY IN. Any man can find a place private enough if he is disposed. Our Lord prayed on a mountain; Peter on the rooftop; Isaac in the field; Nathanael under the fig tree; Jonah in the whale's belly. Any place may become a closet, an oratory and a Bethel, and be to us the presence of God.

Do not say YOU HAVE NO TIME. There is plenty of time if men will employ it. Time may be short, but time is always long enough for prayer. Daniel had all the affairs of a kingdom on his hands, and yet he prayed three times a day. David was the ruler over a mighty nation, and yet he says; "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray" (Psalm 55 verse 17). WHEN TIME IS REALLY WANTED, TIME CAN ALWAYS BE FOUND.

Reader, salvation is very near you. Do not lose heaven for want of asking. Go this day, and TAKE THE FIRST STEP. Pour out your heart before God. Tell Him that you are a poor, unworthy sinner, and that you want to be saved. Tell Him that you have heard that He will hear all who ask in Christ's Name, and that in Christ's Name you ask to be saved. BUT do not put it off.

BEWARE OF EXCUSES

Bishop Ryle.

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Preaching from the Past

"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death"

(Romans 7 verse 24)

Be thou not cast down, my dear reader, if the Lord, the Spirit is teaching you the same lesson as He taught the Apostle Paul, in the same way that he taught the Apostle Paul. If he is now ploughing up the hidden evil, breaking up the fallow ground, discovering to you more of the evil principal of your heart, the iniquity of your fallen nature, and that, too, it may be a time of deep trial, of heavy heartbreaking affliction. Ah! thou art ready to exclaim: "All these things are against me; I was at ease, but He hath broken me asunder; He hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for His mark. His archers compass me about; He cleaveth my reigns asunder and doth not spare. He breaketh me with breach upon breach; He runneth upon me like a giant!" AM I A CHILD OF GOD? Can I be the subject of so much hidden evil, and of such deep overwhelming trial? Is this the way He dealeth with His people?

Yes, dear believer, thou art not solitary or alone, for along this path all the covenant people of God are travelling to their brighter and better home. Here they become acquainted with their own weaknesses, their perpetual liability to fall; here they renounce their former thoughts of self-power, and of self-keeping; and here, too, they learn more of Jesus as their strength, their all-sufficient keeper. More of Him as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Cheer up, then, for the Lord thy God is leading thee on by a safe and a right way to bring thee to a city of rest.

Octavius Winslow

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WHY I DON'T GO TO THE CINEMA!

1. The manager of the cinema has never called on me.
2. I don't like the music.
3. The shows are too long. I can't sit still for three hours.
4. The people who go to the cinema don't live up to the high moral standards of the film.
5. The people who go to the cinema are not friendly. I have gone in and out many times and no one has spoken to me.
6. Every time I go I am asked for money.
7. The shows are always in the evening, the only time I have with the family.
8. I find the seats very uncomfortable.
9. The last time I went someone was sitting in the seat I have sat in for years.
10. The new manager has made far too many changes. I liked it the way it was when I was a child.

SOUNDS ALMOST LIKE SOME FOLKS' ATTITUDE TO THE Church!

NOBODY'S CHURCH

Fred Somebody, Tom Nobody, Pete Anybody and Joe Everybody were neighbours. All four belonged to the same Church, but you couldn't have enjoyed worshipping with them.

Everybody went fishing on a Sunday or went to visit friends. Anybody wanted to come to Church to worship, but was afraid Somebody wouldn't speak to him, so Nobody went to Church. Really, Nobody was the only consistent one of the four.

Nobody did the visitation. Nobody worked on the Church building. Nobody distributed tracts. Nobody prayed for the minister. Once they needed a Sunday School Teacher. Everybody thought Anybody would do it; and Somebody thought Everybody would teach. Guess who finally did it? That's right... Nobody!

It came to pass that a fifth neighbour came to live among them. This man was an unbeliever. Everybody thought Somebody should witness to him - Anybody should at least have made an effort. Guess who finally won him for Christ? Right again... NOBODY!

Well ——— who are YOU?

(From a Church magazine)

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It was on the 17th of this month long ago, in the year 1791, to be exact, a woman of no mean birth - Selina, Countess of Huntingdon - departed this life to find eternal rest in the presence of Jesus Christ her Saviour. Although she was born a Lady and lived a Countess of one of the most influential houses in England, the Countess of Huntingdon died in poverty. A few months before her death she left her only will and testament. "I do hereby declare", she wrote, "That all my present peace and my hope of future glory depend wholly, fully and finally upon the merits of Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. I commit my soul into His arms unreservedly as a subject of His sole mercy to all eternity."

To the Countess of Huntingdon, this was life's treasure and eternity's hope. And so thankful to God had she been to receive this treasure and this hope, that she counted all else but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ her Lord; a knowledge that had eluded her for a good part of her life.

It really all begins when the young Lady Selina is a child of 9 years old. Up to that time she was always looked upon as completely free from care, as most children of that are. But, in her 9th year something took place that was to leave its impression on her and completely change her whole outlook for many years to come. She is out walking with her sisters when suddenly they come upon a funeral procession. The coffin is small, and Selina asks one of the villagers by the side of the road who it is that has died. "It is a child", she was told; and there immediately rushes into her mind an entirely new conception of life that she has never before considered — that children die. Was it a boy or a girl, she enquired further. It was a girl, she was told. "What age was she?" "She was nine!" Her sisters look at Selina with eyes full of meaning. She too is a girl of nine; and into the young Lady Selina's heart and mind there floods the stark reality of the truth that she is a citizen of eternity. In her room that evening she thought and thought of what she had seen and heard, and her young mind searched for some foundation on which she could base her hope of happiness in that world which is to come as well as in this present one in which she lived. She had no one to turn to; even the Church of her day was formal and hypocritical, and in that ninth year of her life the Lady Selina had fallen heir to a fact that was going to haunt her for many years yet. Often she would go to that lonely grave of the unknown 9-year old girl, and there she would pray for an answer to her quest, but none was forthcoming.

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The years that follow see the Lady Selina, now a young woman scrupulously doing everything in her power to merit favour with her God above; but she is plagued with the knowledge of her own sinful heart. "My best righteousness", she later wrote, "now appeared to be but filthy rags, which, so far from justifying me before God, increased my condemnation. I saw that ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God". See the picture that she gives of herself as she lies across her bed, bejewelled and elegant in the evening dress that she had worn at the ball from which she had just fled to pour out her heart before God and confess her utter poverty in His sight. "... My heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", she cries out before Him; but, she is still without Christ, and, therefore, without hope in this world, or hope for the one to come.

But hope was soon to dawn! She is now married; she is now the Countess of Huntingdon, and she has two sisters-in-law who have decided to set out for an evening's entertainment by going to listen to a certain "field preacher" called George Whitfield. With his friends, this man is turning England upside down, and within an hour, the Lady Margaret - one of Selina's sisters-in-law, yields to the claims of Christ in her life. She tells her experience to the Countess — "Everything has changed", she says, "since I trusted Christ for salvation!" SINCE I TRUSTED CHRIST FOR SALVATION! The Countess thought, and as she turned to the Word of God, she read these lines... "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ". On what foundation could she rest her hope of happiness for the eternal world? That had been her life-long quest and question. At last, here was the answer... "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ". The day began to dawn, one of her biographers tells us. All her distresses and fears were immediately removed, and she was filled with joy and peace in believing. She determined thence forward to present herself to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which, she was now convinced, was her reasonable service.

Never was a vow fulfilled more literally, more completely and more cheerfully, it has been said, than the vow that the young Countess registered on that memorable day. Every penny that she had in her private income she devoted to the spread of the revival under the Wesleys and George Whitfield. These men had been forbidden to preach in the majority of the churches, remember, and so the Countess of Huntingdon built attractive chapels throughout the country for the ejected preachers. Into her home she invited the revival preachers to preach to her guests, and these included Princes and statesmen, poets and actors, authors and peers. You can hardly find one distinguished name in the annals of the times, it has been said, but you will find that name also among the Countess of Huntingdon's guests. On three evenings a week she crowded her home with the elite of the land; but, on almost every morning and afternoon of the week she visited the poorest and meanest cottages of England. For as long as her money lasted she built her churches all over the country, and when her money was all gone, she sold her jewels to build more.

Thus she died in poverty as far as this world's treasure is concerned, but there was laid up for her "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory". From that memorable day when she was a child of 9 she had sought that city "whose builder and maker was God:" but she knew not the foundation on which that city was built until the Lord in His appointed time

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enlightened the sacred page of His Word to her... "Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ".

"I do hereby declare that all my present peace and my hope of future glory depend wholly, fully and finally upon the merits of Jesus Christ my Lord..."

One of the Countess of Huntingdon's favourite chapters of the Bible, even before her conversion, was the first chapter of First Corinthians. After her conversion, she often rejoiced in verse 26 of that chapter... "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called," it says.

"Oh how I thank God for that little letter 'm', she used to say; supposing I had read "not **ANY** noble are called!"

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