

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 39 issued November 2002

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# Bunyan's Evangelist — the Pastor's Letter

Dear Friends,

I would draw your attention to a man whose picture is one of a thousand. He can say in the words of the Apostle: "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel". And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips, it is to show thee that this work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand AS IF HE PLEADED WITH MEN.

This is the picture of the Evangelist that is shown and explained to Pilgrim in the House of Interpreter in Bunyan's famous book. Evangelist, in Bunyan's reckoning, is a man who begets children in the faith. The "tools of his trade", if we may use such an expression, are: -

"His eyes lifted up to heaven"; this is him in prayer and communion with His God in whose Name he goes forward as an ambassador.

"The best of books in his hand"; this might mean either the best of all the available books that tell about man and his relation with God - the best of commentaries and histories and exposition of the Word of God; or it might mean the best Book of all — The Bible itself which is the first and greatest tool of the true Evangelist.

"And the law of truth writ on his lips"; the law of God's truth is what ever proceeds from his lips.

These are the tools of the true, sincere Evangelist. When we know a plumber or a carpenter by the tools they carry - so, we know that man to be a man whose job it is "to know and unfold dark things to sinners"; he is an Evangelist - a bearer of the Evangel - the Good News. And see how he conducts his business, says Bunyan; he stands... "AS IF HE PLEADED WITH MEN".

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Now, my brethren, could I leave you with that thought? If we are to have a watchword for the days that lie ahead could it be this? ... PLEADING WITH MEN! But you see if we, or others are going to be PLEADING WITH MEN! PLEADING with them that they see their lost and ruined state before the God with whom they have to do, and turn and take the offer of the Gospel of pardon as it is delivered in the Name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, THEN ... then, we should be PLEADING WITH GOD! Pleading with God that He will graciously use His servant in the salvation of souls and the begetting of many spiritual children; Pleading with God that the Evangelist will be given a voice to "raise the dead"; pleading with God that his "PLEADING WITH MEN" will bear much fruit, for "unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it".

Prayer is an opportunity to plead with God for the outpouring of His Gracious Holy Spirit upon us. "Oh! Take care, take care, Church of Christ, that thou dost not cease thy prayers", said Spurgeon; ... "If you cease your prayers it is all up with me and all over with you". Pray for the preacher, brethren! Never mind praising him, PRAY for him, because an awful responsibility rests on his shoulders. "As I was walking in the fields", Murray McCheyne once wrote in his diary, "the thought came over me with almost overwhelming power, that every one of my flock must soon be in heaven or hell. Oh, how I wished that I had a tongue like thunder, that I might make all hear; or that I had a frame like iron, that I might visit every one and say: "Escape for thy life! Ah, sinners! You little know how I fear that you will lay the blame of your damnation at my door".

This is a thought that comes to every preacher - to every Evangelist, and which at times break in upon every Christian as well. "God forbid", said Samuel of old, "God forbid that I should sin against God in ceasing to pray for you".

Will you take this invitation to pray for the preachers and evangelists seriously? Will you pray for those who will and are PLEADING WITH MEN? Will you pray for those with whom they will be pleading?

Sincerely,  
W.J. Seaton

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# *Gleaning in the Psalms*

## *(Psalm 4)*

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This is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour. Here he reviews his Ebanezers (Hitherto hath the Lord helped me), and takes comfort from them. It is not to be imagined that He who has helped us in six troubles will leave us in the seventh.

*C.H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 1 — "Hear me when I call, O God of my Righteousness; thou has enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer".**

From his prayer learn: -

1. Though there be many and divers troubles of the godly, yet there is but one God to give comfort and relief, and one way to draw it from God; i.e. by prayer in faith ... HEAR ME WHEN I CALL.
2. Albeit the conscience of much sin be opposed to the prayer of the believer, yet the everlasting righteousness of faith, whereof the Lord is God, author and maintainer for ever, doth open the way to the supplicant ... "hear me when I call, O GOD OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS".
3. Acknowledgement of by-past mercies in former experience is a good preparation for a new mercy, and a means to strengthen our faith to receive it... "THOU HAST ENLARGED ME WHEN I WAS IN DISTRESS, HAVE MERCY UPON ME".
4. Faith is a good orator, and a noble disputer in a strait. It can reason from God's readiness to hear ... "have mercy upon me, AND HEAR MY PRAYER".

*David Dickson*

**Verse 2 — "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?"**

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We might imagine every syllable of this precious Psalm used by our Master some evening, when about to leave the Temple for the day, and retiring to His wonted rest at Bethany, after another fruitless expostulation with the men of Israel ... "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" BUT FURTHER, not only is this the utterance of the HEAD, it is also the language of one of His MEMBERS in full sympathy with Him in holy feeling. This is a Psalm with which the righteous may make their dwellings resound, morning and evening, as they cast a sad look over a world that rejects God's grace ... "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn (HIS) glory into shame?"

*Andrew Bonar*

**Verse 3 — "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself: The Lord will hear when I call upon him".**

See in this verse ... THE BLESSED SEPARATIST. (1) Who is he? (2) Who separated him? (3) With what end? (4) How to make men know it? — "Hints to a Village Preacher."

*Andrew Fuller*

**Verse 4 — "Stand in Awe ... commune with your own heart..."**

You can hardly impose a severer task upon a wicked man than to go and retire for an hour or two and commune with himself. He knows not how to face his own thoughts; his own soul is a devil to him, as indeed it will be in hell the most frightful tormenting devil.

*John Howe*

**Verse 6 — "There be many that say 'Who will show us any good?'"**

A child is eager to have any toy he sees, but throws it away at the sight of another, and is equally eager to have that. Men and women are most of them children through life, and only change one toy for another from the cradle to the grave.

*Anon.*

**Verse 6 — "... Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us".**

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Where Christ reveals Himself there is satisfaction in the slenderest portion, and without Christ there is emptiness in the greatest fulness.

*Alexander Grosse*

**Verse 7 — "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased".**

What madness and folly is it that the favourites of heaven should envy the men of the world, who at best do feed upon the scraps that come from God's table! ... is it not below a Christian to envy others for temporals, when himself enjoys the spirituals?

*Thomas Brooks*

**Verse 8 — "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety".**

It is said of the husbandman that, having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth day and night, and the seed springs up and grows HE KNOWS NOT HOW. So a good man, having by prayer and faith cast his care upon God, resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him according to His holy will.

*Matthew Henry*

"I will both lay me down in peace,  
And quiet sleep will I take;  
Because Thou only me to dwell  
In safety, Lord, does make".

*Metrical Version*

*(HAVE YOU READ THE PSALM? These "gleanings" are intended as a **HELP** to reading, not a **SUBSTITUTE**).*

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## **Preaching from the Past**

**"With my soul have I desired thee in the night"**  
**Isaiah Chapter 26 verse 9**

(1) I am about to address this text to the more confirmed believer: and the first fact I shall educe from it is that the Christian man has not always a bright, shining sun: THAT HE HAS SEASONS OF DARKNESS AND OF NIGHT.

It is a great truth that religion - the true religion of God - is calculated to give a man happiness below as well as bliss above. But, notwithstanding, experience tells us that if the course of the just be "as the shining light" yet sometimes that light is eclipsed. There are many who have rejoiced in the presence of God for a season; they have walked along green pastures, by the side of the still waters, and suddenly they find streams brackish to their taste and bitter to their spirits, and they say "Surely if I were a child of God this would not happen". Oh, say not so, thou who art walking in darkness. The best of God's saints have their nights; the dearest of His children have to walk through a weary wilderness. There is not a Christian who has enjoyed perpetual happiness; there is no believer who can always sing a song of joy. We need clouds and darkness to exercise our faith; to cut off self-dependence, and make us put more faith in Christ, and less in evidence, less in frames and feelings.

The best of God's children - I repeat it again for the comfort of those who are suffering depression of spirits - have their nights.

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"Oh sir", says one, "I have not a single evidence of my Christianity now. When I turn over God's Scriptures there is no promise; I am afraid there could not have been a work of grace in my heart, or else I should not have so many corrupt imaginations, filthy desires, hard thought of God; so much pride, so much selfishness and self-will. I am afraid I am none of His". Now, that is the very reason why you are one of His that you are able to say that; for God's people pass through the night. I confess I do myself constantly, and very often there are times when I could not prove my election in Jesus Christ, nor my adoption, though I rejoice that for the most part I can cry:

"A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing".

Yet at other seasons I am sure the meanest lamb in Jesu's fold I reckon ten thousand times more in advance than myself.

(2) The first part then is fully established by experience, that Christians very frequently have their nights. But the second thing here is that A CHRISTIAN MAN'S RELIGION WILL KEEP ITS COLOUR IN THE NIGHT. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night". What a mighty deal of silver-slipper religion we have in this world. There are some goods whose colour you can only see by daylight - and there are many professors the colours of whom you can only see by daylight. If they were in the night of trouble and persecution, you would find that there was very little of them. But beloved, do you not know that the best test of a Christian is the night? The nightingale, if she would sing by day when every goose is cackling, would be reckoned no better a musician than the wren. A Christian, if he only remained steadfast by daylight, when every coward is bold, what would he be?

(3) A third remark from this to the confirmed Christian is: ALL THAT THE CHRISTIAN WANTS IN THE NIGHT IS HIS GOD. "With desire have I desired THEE in the night". By day there are many things that a Christian will desire besides his Lord; but if you place a Christian in trouble, you will find that he does not want gold then - that he does not want carnal honour - that he wants his God.

I suppose he is like the sailor, when he sails along smoothly, he loves to have fair weather, and wants this and that to amuse himself with on deck. But when

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the winds blow, all that he wants the haven. It is just so with the Christian; when he is going along smoothly, he wants this and that comfort; he is aspiring after this position, or he is wanting to obtain this and that elevation. But let him once doubt his interest in Christ - let him once get into some soul-distress and trouble, so that it is very dark - and all he will feel then is: "With desire I have desired thee in the night":

"Give me Christ or else I die,  
These can never satisfy".

(4) But now, one more remark before I leave my address to confirmed saints. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN ALL THE SAINTS CAN DO IS DESIRE. "I have DESIRED thee - I have desired thee in the night". "Yes, Lord, if I have not believed in Thee, I have DESIRED Thee; and if I have not spent and been spent in thy service, yet one thing I know, and the devil cannot beat it out of me, I have DESIRED Thee". "With desire I have desired Thee in the night".

*C.H. Spurgeon*

*(Abridged from Sermon Number 31, New Park Street Pulpit, Volume 1)*

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Dr. Tate and his wife, in the Irish rebellion, were flying through the woods with a sucking-child, which was just ready to expire. The mother going to rest it upon a rock, put her hand upon a bottle of warm milk, by which it was preserved.

*From "The Mystery of Providence" by John Flavel.*

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# Boys & Girls Page

Dear Boys and Girls,

Many years ago on the Island of Skye there lived a little girl. This little girl became convinced that God was not on the Island, and so, she decided that she must go and look for God. Her parents didn't try to stop her as she left her home, because they thought that she had surely gone mad. And as she crossed on the ferry from Skye to the mainland and began asking everyone that she met if they

knew where she could find God, they thought she was mad as well.

On and on she travelled, calling at every house and asking her same question. Everyone was quite kind to her and gentle with her, because they all thought that she had lost her reason, but no one could tell her where God was to be found. Eventually, she came to the town of Inverness and stopped the first person she met there. "I am come from Skye", she told the woman that she had stopped, "I am come from Skye

where God is not; can you tell me where I will find Him?" This woman was a Christian woman, and at first she too thought that the little girl was unsound in her mind; however, the wee girl was so determined that the woman said: "Come with me and perhaps I will be able to take you to where you will be able to find God". She took her home to her house, and the next day, which was Sunday, she took her along to Church. For the first time in her life this little girl heard



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the Gospel being preached. The minister told how the Lord Jesus Christ had come into this world to save sinners. The little girl realised that she was a sinner and that Jesus must have come to save her, and she asked Christ to save her. How happy she was now, because, you see, boys and girls, she had, at last, found God, because she had found the Lord Jesus Christ.

The little girl never returned to Skye, but here's what she did do.

She lived with that kind lady who had taken her to Church until she grew up and went to live in the village of Croy; and every day she used to pray that God would go to the Island of Skye so that many, many people could find Him there.

Many years later, God was found by a great many people in Skye when a great religious revival took place there. The churches were packed, and many men and women, boys and girls found Jesus as their Saviour.

The people then began to think of that little girl, and here's what they used to say: "Perhaps this is the answer to her prayers".

Do you pray, boys and girls that others will find Jesus? I hope you do.

*Mrs Seaton*

Robert Murray McCheyne wrote the poem shown below to a little boy he knew but it also applies to any little girl or even to any adult.

"Peace be to thee, little boy,  
Many years of life and joy;  
Love your Bible more than play,  
Grow in wisdom every day;  
Like the dove that found no rest,  
'Till it flew to Noah's breast,  
Rest not in this world of sin,  
'Till the Saviour take thee in".

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How often, when we stand up to sing the "Songs of Zion", do we fail to appreciate out of what hardship and turmoil of mind many of our most famous hymns were born. "This Month Long Ago", on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month in 1731, there was born in the old Rectory in Berkhamstead, the man who was destined to be one of the most outstanding of the Church's poets. His name was William Cowper, and almost from his earliest days (his mother died when he was still a child of 6 years), he knew little of true peace of mind. From boyhood he was subject to fits of severe depression, and though he fought bravely against them, they often recurred - sometimes in acute forms which even led him to attempt to take his life on several occasions.

His career as a lawyer had to be terminated on account of one of these attacks, but in many ways, this was to prove to be a blessing in disguise. His depression sent him to God's Word; for, although the son of a minister, his life had been lived without any reference to God whatsoever. As Cowper read God's Word he was let to pore over the words of Romans Chapter 3 verse 25; "... Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood". Cowper's mind was enlightened and he saw at once that there was salvation in none but Christ.

The steps of God's "mysterious way" that Cowper was later to write about began to show themselves, and after his conversion, the shy invalid, as he now was, was sent to live in the home of the family of Unwin. Mr Unwin had just died, and the widow and mother decided to rear her children in the market town of Olney, where the great John Newton was then minister. Needless to say, when the Unwin family moved into the red house in the Market Square, William Cowper was with them. The years which Cowper was to spend under the ministry of, and in friendship with John Newton were to prove to be the most settled years of his life, but even during these days the darkness of depression often cast its shadow over his soul, and he often wrote out of a heavy heart. Some would tell us that it was Newton's severe Calvinistic outlook and theology

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that led to Cowper's depressive states, but this is a completely distorted picture, and although he was still often cast down, nevertheless, what peace of mind he knew, he knew at Olney, under Newton.

The house in which the Unwin family lived was separated from Newton's vicarage only by a garden, and many hours were spent in the closest communion on the things of Christ between the two friends. Their united gifts produced the famous "Olney Hymns", most of which were written especially for the Tuesday evening prayer meeting of the parish.

When word spread around the village that Cowper or Newton had penned a new hymn, there was always sure to be an air of anticipation at the meeting until the words were read and sung.

Many of Cowper's own greatest hymns belong to this collection. "Oh, for a closer walk with God"; "There is a fountain filled with blood"; "Jesus, where'er Thy people meet"; "Hark my soul, it is the Lord", and so on.

Cowper's own testimony of his salvation, in many ways, bespeaks the panting after the assurance that always seemed to elude him...

"I was a stricken deer that left the herd  
Long since: with many an arrow deeply infixed  
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew  
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.  
There was I found by One who had Himself  
Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore  
And in His hands and feet the cruel scars.  
With gentle force, soliciting the darts,  
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live".

One of Cowper's worst attacks occurred in the year 1773. At this time he was convinced that he was doomed to hell and "damned below Judas". He fled for refuge to Newton's comforting counsel, and for a whole year refused to leave the vicarage. Again, in answer to those critics of Newton and his religion, let it be said that it was the pastor of Olney's gentle care and cheerful faith that nursed his sick friend back to health again, and left on record some of the greatest experimental utterances that the Church's hymn books know.

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Perhaps William Cowper did live in the depths of despair very often; but, do some of his words not touch the depths of all our hearts at times if we are truly the Lord's children. Which of Christ's redeemed cannot look into their soul and sigh —

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still;  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill".

And even at our "best of times", is there not the deep-rooted cry

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,  
That my love is weak and faint".

Words born out of deep conflict of soul, and yet, words that can be our own in so many ways.

 *If anyone is interested in  
praying for revival, come in  
and join me*

## **THE CARD IN THE WINDOW**

"If anyone is interested in praying for revival, come in and join me". So ran the words on a card that Calvin Lamphier displayed in the window of his room in Fulton Street, New York, in the year 1857.

The first day that the card appeared he prayed alone. Then others began to join him until the room became too small. The burden for revival began to spread until hundreds were meeting to ask the Lord to "Turn again our captivity, O Lord".

Very soon the winds of revival began to blow in New York and 250,000 souls were ushered into the Kingdom of God in a few weeks.

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# A Letter from the Welsh Revival

My Dear Brother,

Much as we rejoice in the present revival, which is quickly spreading over our dear land, it is to our comfort and consolation to remember that the Lord visited us in the same manner, only locally as a Church and neighbourhood, something over a year ago.

The Church of which I am pastor was at that time in a state of cold indifference, the ordinary services being wholly formal with no enthusiasm and with conversations few and far between. This was early in the spring of last year (1903).

One evening some of our young brethren - four in number - were found on a mountain ... holding a prayer meeting; and it was discovered that they had been there every night for a month. What was their object? Nothing less than to plead with God to revive His work. The brother who found them heartily joined in. These services, though informal, continued each night until the Church at large was moved by the fact that her case was pleaded before God by brethren who were only eighteen years of age.

By that time they were being visited by some who never entered a place of worship, and, to our astonishment, those people remained to pray with them. Every night the number increased and gradually more Church members became interested. As numbers increased so did the fervour. The flame now reached the whole Church and we were moved by the spirit of prayer and a passion for souls. The neighbourhood was soon ablaze with the divine fire, and the meetings, which at first were attended by only four, were now frequented by scores. All testified to the power of God in an especial manner.

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