

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 42 issued May 2003

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The Pastor's Letter

My Dear Brethren,

A few weeks ago I was reading one of Charles Haddon Spurgeon's sermons which was introduced by these words. "Six years ago today, as near as possible at this very hour of the day, I was in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity...seeking rest, and finding none, I stepped within this house of God, and sat there, afraid to look upward, lest I should be utterly cut off, and lest His fierce wrath should consume me. The minister rose in his pulpit, and as I have done this morning, read this text: "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else". I looked at that moment; the grace of faith was vouchsafed to me in the selfsame instant; and now I think I can say with truth -

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

"I shall never forget that day while memory holds its place".

"Oh, yes", you say," Spurgeon is just giving us his testimony there!" Yes, he is. But listen to the opening words of it again; "Six years ago today", he begins; and it's that statement that makes the testimony of Spurgeon so outstanding. He is here preaching a sermon to mark the 6th anniversary of his conversion, but he is preaching this sermon from the pulpit of his SECOND charge as a minister of the gospel; and in the 2 YEARS that he has been in this Church his evening congregation has risen from 200 to 10,000!

The story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon is, of course, almost without parallel in the history of the Christian Church. He has been well called "The Prince of Preachers", and if all his writings were gathered together, it has been estimated that they would equal the "27 volumes of the 9th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica". But, are there any contributory causes to his greatness? On the human level, can we not trace some influence at work in the years before our God laid His hand upon him and filled him with His Spirit? I think we can; I want us to give serious thought to the influence for good which Christian instruction can have on the children that God has placed in our trust, either as parents, or as a Church of Christ our Saviour.

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Imagine a scene like this. An old minister is standing at a street corner indulging in some pretty loose talk with a gang of hooligans well known for their blasphemy, which they were indulging in to the full. A young boy, just 6 years old, steps up to the clergyman, and without a tremor in his voice recites the words of the Lord in the old man's ear: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" This was Spurgeon; a very young Spurgeon! But, as you can see, already he was steeped in the Word of Truth that he was to wield so mightily in later years.

Spurgeon was reared up in a home where the Word of God was faithfully and truthfully taught, and I believe it's true to say this, that the greatest single contributory factor in the weak state of the Church today is the lack of "home instruction" that should be the heritage of every child of believing parents.

I have simply used Spurgeon as an outstanding example to illustrate the obvious. If we ground our children in the faith while they are still young, "that knowledge shall not depart from them". Professor McLeod of the Free Church College in a past day likened the whole process to a man with a water wheel. If there is a drought, the man doesn't let the wheel run to rust, but keeps it well oiled and maintained, so that when the rains finally come, the wheel is ready for action. This is a picture of our children. The Holy Spirit may not have entered their hearts as yet, but surely it is all wisdom as well as all duty to make them as ready as we possibly can for service once God sends the showers of His blessed salvation into their hearts. This was the case with Spurgeon, and may more of the giants of our faith.

Now two things arise from this. **FIRST**, Christian parent! The place for the education of your child in the things of Christ is not primarily the Sunday School; it is your own fireside. **SECOND**, the true work of the Sunday School, then, is not the instruction of believers' children, it is the instruction of unbelievers' children. The work of the Sunday School is Evangelistic.

Let us not try and shift the responsibility of instructing our own children in our own home on to the shoulders of the Sunday School (and then complain when it isn't done to our satisfaction); neither let us neglect our evangelistic responsibility to those young children who are being reared up in spiritual ignorance. One last question, has the time come for us to strike out in the work of Sunday School on a larger scale?

Your affectionate pastor,
W.J. Seaton (September 1967)

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Gleanings In the Psalms (Psalm 7)

Psalm 7 may be called - THE SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT.

Division: -

The danger is stated and prayer offered. (Verses 1-2)

The Psalmist most solemnly avows his innocence. (Verses 3-5)

The Lord is pleaded with to arise to judgment. (Verses 6-7)

The Lord, sitting upon His throne, hears the renewed appeal of the slandered supplicant. (Verses 8-9)

The Lord clears His servant and threatens the wicked. (Verses 10-13)

The slanderer is seen in vision bringing a curse upon his own head. (Verses 14-16)

David retires from trial singing a hymn of praise to his righteous God. (Verse 17)

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 1. "O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust; SAVE ME FROM ALL THEM THAT PERSECUTE ME..."

We read in the Book of Genesis that after the fall of man, the Lord said unto the serpent: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed". We find in the psalms abundant evidence of this enmity. We not only find Satan at enmity with Christ, but also the children of Satan at enmity with those who are Christ's.

Charles Girdlestone

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Verse 4. "If I have rewarded evil unto him that is at peace with me..."

THE BEST REVENGE. Evil for good is devil-like; evil for evil is beast-like; good for good is man-like; good for evil is God-like.

Hints to the Village Preacher

Verse 5. "... Let him tread down my life upon the earth".

The allusion here is to how the vanquished were often treated in battle, when they were rode over by horses, or trampled by men in the dust. The idea of David is that if he was guilty, he would be willing that his enemy should triumph over him, should subdue him, should treat him with the utmost indignity and scorn.

Albert Barnes

Verse 6. "Arise, O Lord ... and awake for me to the judgment that Thou hast commanded".

We can never pray in faith unless we attend, in the first place, to what God commands. David, therefore, in order to pray aright, reposes himself on the Word and promise of God; and the import of his exercise is this: Lord, I am not led by ambition, or foolish headstrong passion... to ask Thee whatever is pleasing to my flesh; but it is the clear light of Thy Word which directs me, and upon it I securely depend.

John Calvin

Verse 9. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for THE RIGHTEOUS GOD TRIETH THE HEART AND REIGNS".

I that alone am Infinite, can try
How deep within itself thine heart doth lie;
Thy seaman's plummet can but reach the ground,
I find that which thine heart itself ne'er found.

Francis Quarles

Verse 12. "... He hath bent his bow and made it ready".

The bow is bent, the aim is taken, the arrow is fitted to the string, and what, O sinner, if the arrow should be let fly at thee even now! Remember, God's arrows never miss

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the mark, and are, every one of them, "instruments of death". Judgment may tarry, but it will not come too late. The Greek proverb saith: "The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder."

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 14. "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood".

The longer a sin is in forming and forging within, and the oftener the head and the heart meet about it, the more complete the sin. There are many litters of unformed sin in one, such, I mean, as are conceived and cast forth in the hurry of an extemporary passion; such sudden acts show weakness; the others, deep wickedness.

William Gurnall

Verse 15. "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made". No one can complain of his own measure. No one pities the fate of a man buried in that pit which he dug to receive his neighbour; or the fate of him who owes his death-wound to the return of an arrow shot against heaven.

Bishop Horne

Verse 17. "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness".

To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them; to bless Him for miseries is the way to remove them. No good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured.

William Dyer

"According to His righteousness
The Lord I'll magnify;
And will sing praise unto the name
of God that is most high".

Metrical Version

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The Bible

The Bible is like unto a magnificent palace constructed of precious oriental stone, comprising 66 stately chambers. Each one of these chambers is different from its fellows, and is perfect in its individual beauty, while together they form an edifice incomparably majestic, glorious, and sublime.

In the book of Genesis we enter the grand vestibule where we are immediately introduced to the records of the mighty work of God in creation. This vestibule gives access to the Law Courts, passing through which we come to the Picture Gallery of the historical books. Here we find hung upon the walls scenes of battles, heroic deeds, and portraits of valiant men of God. Beyond the Picture Gallery we find the Philosopher's Chamber - the book of Job - passing through which we enter the Music Room - the book of Psalms - and here we linger, thrilled by the grandest harmonies that ever fell on human ears.

Then we come to the Business Office - the book of Proverbs - in the very centre of which stands the motto "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people". Leaving the Business Office we pass into the Research Department - Ecclesiastes - and thence into the Conservatory - the Song of Solomon - where greet us the fragrant aroma of choicest fruits and flowers, and the sweet singing of birds. We then reach the Observatory, where the prophets with their powerful telescopes are looking for the appearing of the "Bright and Morning Star", prior to the dawning of the "Sun of Righteousness".

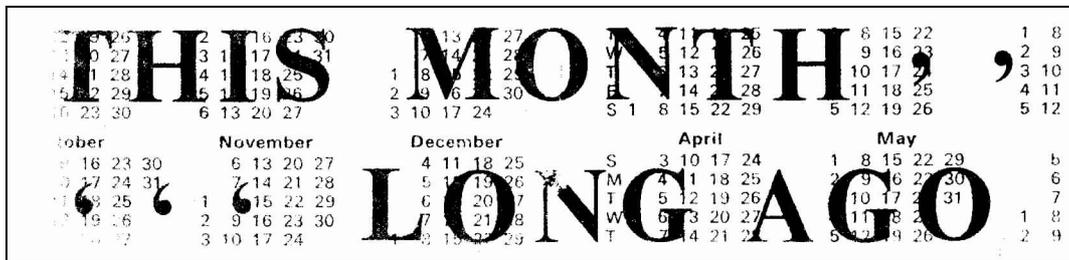
Crossing the courtyard, we come to the Audience Chamber of the King - the Gospels - where we find four life-like portraits of the King Himself, revealing the perfections of His infinite beauty. Next we enter the Workroom of the Holy Spirit - the Acts of the Apostles - and beyond that the Correspondence Room - the Epistles - where we see Paul and Peter, James, John and Jude, busy at their tables under the personal direction of the Spirit of Truth.

Finally we enter the Throne Room - the book of Revelation - where we are enrapt by the mighty volume of adoration and praise which is ever addressed to the enthroned King, and which fills the vast Chamber; while in the adjacent Galleries and Judgment Hall there are portrayed solemn scenes of judgment and wondrous scenes of glory associated with the coming manifestation of the Son of God as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

S.G.M.

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In this edition our thoughts turn to the young man who has been well named "The Morning Star of the Missionary Movement". It was the 20th April, 1718, that David Brainerd was born in the little town of Haddam in Connecticut. As a child, he said of himself, he was "somewhat sober and inclined to melancholy"; and perhaps this retiring nature fitted him well for the solitude that he was to face in later life. David Brainerd began to preach when he was 24, and for 5 years laboured among the Indians of New Jersey and Pennsylvania until 1747, when ill-health forced him to give up his work of love for Christ. He died in the house of the famous Jonathan Edwards when he was still in his 29th year, proving himself to be a true "morning star" that had blazed in the heavens only until the day was ready to break on the missionary scene.

"What can be done", asked the great Methodist John Wesley. "What can be done to revive the work of God where it has decayed?" And then he answers his own question... "Let every preacher read carefully the life of David Brainerd!" In accordance with John Wesley's counsel, William Carey set to, to read Brainerd's Journal and from that caught the vision of a world for Christ. Henry Martyn too, and Dr. A. J. Gordon were influenced in their missionary enterprises by digesting the life and labours of the young missionary to the Redskins, and in more recent years, Dr. Andrew Murray of South Africa could write of Brainerd's biography: "Read and pause, and read again, as in God's presence, until you hear the voice of the Spirit CALLING YOU to follow in the footsteps of God's servant."

David Brainerd was indeed an early light to guide many. But, from what source did he draw his strength of influence which still is alive even today to all who will take time to read his life and diary? As we've said already, he could write of himself that he was "somewhat sober and inclined to melancholy"; and as we remarked, this may have been an essential NATURAL attribute to his service of later years. "But I do not remember anything of conviction of sin", he could also write; and so, regardless of what natural attributes he possessed, he would still have to be endowed with the supernatural attribute of salvation before he could influence anyone.

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But it must come as a blow to any spiritual pride of service that we may possess when we learn that it was not until Brainerd was 21 - just 8 years before his death - that the light of the Gospel began to work in his heart and mind. "At this time", he says of it, "The way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom, suitableness and excellency that I wondered that I should ever have desired any other way of salvation... If I could have been saved by my own duties, or any other way that I had formerly conceived, my whole soul would now have refused it. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation..." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!"

But how could the world "see and comply with this way of salvation?" The greatest part of the world had never even so much as heard that there was such a way. "If any man thirst", thought Brainerd; "ANY man." But how could he reach the mass of the world with this message that had completely transformed his own life? The Missionary Societies were still unknown, and even unthought of; how could he span the ocean to seek out the primitives and tell them about the love of God in Christ Jesus the Saviour? But, did he need to do that? Did he need to cast his eyes to such far away shores? Was there not a whole mission field almost on his doorstep? And so, David Brainerd, 3 years after his conversion, turned to his red-skinned fellows to call them to "come and drink of the water of life freely".

Two things became his desire, he writes in his diary: "Sanctification in myself, and the ingathering of God's elect". Among those savages on the American prairies, David Brainerd could see with the eye of faith a great company of the multitude for whom Christ laid down His life. It was the life of personal devotion to duty and love to Christ which sprung from this great desire that made David Brainerd such a powerful influence to those who were to later blaze in the missionary sky.

Above all things, his life of prayer has been a constant holy challenge. When William Carey offered a word of encouragement and instruction to his fellow workers, that word nearly always contained the words: "Think of Brainerd wrestling in prayer among the solitudes".

In 1747 David Brainerd rode back from "The solitudes" for the last time. He was not yet 30, but he had no regrets. "Now that I am dying," he exclaimed, "I declare that I would not for all the world have spent my life otherwise." And then, casting his eye on the Bible, he cried out with his last breath: "Oh that dear book! That lovely book! I shall soon see it opened!"

"He climbed the steep ascent to heaven,
Through trouble, toil and pain;

O God, to us may grace be given,
To follow in his train".

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Preaching From the Past

(W. C. Burns)

Psalm 110 Verse 3 "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"

The doctrine of Christ crucified is called the power of God, because it is the instrument that God employs in pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan. But yet, my friends, this doctrine is, after all, but an instrument that cannot be effectual unless it is wielded by the almighty Spirit of God.

Often is this great truth demonstrated in the experience of every Christian, and especially of every Christian minister. The truth of the Gospel is often preached with clearness, fulness, earnestness and affection; sinners are taught their ruined and perishing condition under the broken covenant of works, and Christ is freely held out to them and urgently pressed upon them, and yet they remain despisers and rejecters of the Lord from heaven; and the minister of Christ is often found in sadness to exclaim: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The people hear, and are perhaps attentive, and begin to reform many of these sinful practices in which they formerly indulged, but yet their hearts remain unconvinced of sin, and unenlightened in the glorious knowledge of Christ, and unconverted to God; there is still little seeking of God in secret prayer, little alarm experienced on account of sin, and serious efforts to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as He is freely offered.

But oh, how changed is the scene when the Spirit is outpoured! Then the hearts of God's people become full to overflowing with love to Jesus, and are drawn forth in vehement desires after His glorious appearing to build up Zion. They are much in secret, and much in united prayer....

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Then observe the frame of the hearers at such a time. Formerly no terror could awake them from their sleep of death; they still said: "Peace and safety" though sudden destruction was coming upon them ... but now, a few words are enough to pierce their innermost heart... Men and women and children retire from the House of God... they have much business to do with God. Their doors are shut, their Bibles are in their hands, or they are crying to God upon their knees as they are conversing with the godly and obtaining the benefit of their counsel to guide them on the way to Jesus.

These then, my friends, are, you know, some of the marks of a day of the power of Jesus...Satan is discomfited, his captives are set free, and God is glorified.

Boys and Girls Page

Dear Boys and Girls,

The picture on the right shows a portrait of a very famous Hymn-writer called Isaac Watts. He lived about 300 years ago and wrote many famous hymns that we still sing in our Churches.



When Isaac was a very little boy he met with a dreadful accident which left his little back crooked for the rest of his life. In spite of this, however, he was a bright, cheery little boy whom everybody loved, especially when he used to make up his funny little rhymes about things that he saw happening from day to day. One day in school, he was caught laughing at prayers. He was laughing because he had seen, just behind the schoolmaster, a big rat climbing down the bell-rope. The master called him up, and he was just about to get the strap, when the master decided to ask him what had made him laugh. Little Isaac at once replied: -

"There was a rat, for want of stairs,
Came down a rope to go to prayers!"

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The master laughed and let him off.

One other day his father was going to punish him because he wanted him to stop making up his rhymes, but little Isaac said to his father: -

"Dear father, do some pity take,
And I will no more verses make!"

And his father too had to let him off.

But, what were it, boys and girls that really made little Isaac so happy? Well, you see, although he was only 8 years old at this time, he loved Jesus with all his heart and soon his funny little rhymes gave way to great and famous hymns that we often sing in Church.

I am sure you will all know this hymn: -

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord that I should boast
Save in the cross of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Love,
Mrs Seaton

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