

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 46 issued January 2004

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The Pastor's Letter (January 1968) "The Year gone by"

My dear friends,

I'm sure you'll agree with me that in so many ways the Christian is almost always walking a tight rope. There are so many things that we must avoid, and so many things that we must observe to do, that very often, in avoiding one thing, we fail to observe another, and so become one-sided instead of well balanced.

I'm thinking especially of that sin of King David's where Satan proved him to take a census of the children of Israel. This was pride on David's part, and how often we employ the broad principles of that incident as a safeguard to falling into spiritual pride and exhibiting the "great things" that we imagine the Lord has been able to accomplish through us. Now, we are right, in so many ways, in doing this; for the Christianity that consists in "counting heads" and "results" must be an abomination in the eyes of the Lord; especially since the majority of the heads are not worth counting and the great proportion of the results transient. And yet, there is a biblical recognition of, and giving thanks for all that the Lord has evidently done for us, and so, we must be careful that in avoiding one we don't neglect the other.

As this year lies ahead of us, then, let us be encouraged in the tasks that loom large by honestly reviewing some of the things that the Lord has been pleased to do for us in the year that has just gone.

How much there is to thank God for, brethren. Who can commit to paper the feelings of joy in the Lord that we have known on great many occasions over this past year? Brother! Sister in Christ! "Go tell what great things the Lord hath done for thee".

"Before the throne of God above,
I have a strong, a perfect plea;
A great High Priest whose Name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me".

Sincerely,
W.J. Seaton.

(Edited)

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SOME NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

What shall I do?

Get to know yourself; your sins, your wants and needs; and remind yourself of these when you go to prayer, so that your prayer will have both humility and urgency. When men are wilful strangers to themselves and never look backwards or inwards to see what is amiss or wanting, nor look forward to see the prospect before them, no wonder if their hearts be dead and dull, and if they are as unfit to pray as a sleeping man to work.

Richard Baxter

What shall I read?

Read and meditate much on the Bible in private - then you will be the better able to understand when it is being explained in public. The sermon will be of little help to you if you are a stranger to the Bible.

Richard Baxter

What shall I hear?

I warn everyone who loves his soul to be very jealous as to the preaching he regularly hears, and the place of worship he regularly attends. He who deliberately settles down under any ministry which is positively unsound is a very unwise man. I will never hesitate to speak my mind on this point. I know well that many think it a shocking thing for a man to forsake his parish Church. I cannot see with the eyes of such people. To hear unscriptural teaching fifty-two Sundays in every year is a serious thing. It is a continual dropping of slow poison into the mind. I think it almost impossible for a man wilfully to submit himself to it, and not take harm. I see in the New Testament we are plainly told to "prove all things" ... I see in the Book of Proverbs that we are commanded to "cease to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the works of knowledge". If these sound words do not justify a man in ceasing to worship at a Church, if positively false doctrine is preached in it, I know not what words can.

J.C. Ryle

What shall I ask?

Lord! Make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be.

Rbt. Murray McCheyne

"Lord, speak to me that I may speak,
In living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children lost and lone".

F.R. Havergal

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Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 10 Concluded

Verse 11. "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it."

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil". Eccl. 8 verse 11. God forbears punishing, therefore, men forbearing repenting. The sinner thinks thus - "God hath spared me all this while; he that eked out patience into long-suffering; surely he will not punish". But God, by his patience would bribe sinners to repentance; but, alas! How is this patience abused? God's long-suffering hardens: because God stops the vials of his wrath, sinners stop the conduit of tears.

Thomas Watson

Verse 13. "Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?"

The atheist denies God's ordering of sublunary matters ... "Is there knowledge in the Most High?" Making him a maimed deity, without an eye of providence, or an arm of power, and at most restraining him to matters above the clouds. But he that dares to CONFINE the king of heaven will soon after endeavour to DEPOSE him, and fall at last flatly to DENY him.

Thomas Fuller

Verse 14. "Thou has seen it ... the poor committeth himself unto thee".

Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God's dealings with thee; but chide thy heart for it ... and thus doing, with God's blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.

William Gurnall

Verse 17. "Lord, thou has heard THE DESIRE OF THE HUMBLE ...".

Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God in the Name of Christ, for such things are as agreeable to His will. It is an offering of our DESIRES. Desires are the soul and life of prayer; words are but the body. Now, as the body without the soul is dead, so are prayers unless they are animated by our desires - "Lord, thou hast heard the DESIRE of the humble". God heareth not words, but DESIRES.

Thomas Watson

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PSALM 11

The Psalms are a rich repository of experimental knowledge. David, at the different periods of his life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, whether rich or poor, can be placed; and in these heavenly compositions, he delineates all the workings of his heart. He introduces, too, the sentiments and conduct of the various persons who were accessory either to his troubles or his joys; and thus sets before us a compendium of all that is passing in the hearts of men throughout the world. When he penned this Psalm he was under persecution from Saul, who sought his life and hunted him as "a partridge upon the mountains". His timid friends were alarmed for his safety, and recommended him to flee to some mountain where he had a hiding-place, and thus to conceal himself from the rage of Saul. But David, being strong in faith, spurned the idea of resorting to any such expedients, and determined confidently to repose his trust in God.

Charles Simeon

Verse 1. "In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?"

The saints of old would not accept deliverances on base terms. They scorned to fly away for the enjoyment of rest ... As willing were many of the martyrs to die as to dine. The tormentors were TIRED in torturing Blandina (a female martyr).

John Trapp

Verse 2. "For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrows in the quiver". Like the plotting of the chief priests and Pharisees, how they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill Him. They BENT THEIR BOW when they hired Judas Iscariot for the betrayal of his Master; they MADE READY THEIR ARROWS IN THE QUIVER when "they sought false witnesses against Jesus to put him to death".

From Neale's Commentary

Verse 4. "...his eyes behold..." Take God into thy counsel. Heaven overlooks hell. God at any time can tell thee what plots are hatching there against thee.

William Gurnall

Verse 5. "The Lord trieth the righteous..."

Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet -
Lay me low, and keep me there.

William Cowper

Verse 7. (1) The Lord possesses righteousness as a personal attribute ... "for the RIGHTEOUS Lord..." (2) Loves it in the abstract ... "For the righteous Lord LOVETH RIGHTEOUSNESS..." (3) And blesses those who practise it ... "for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; HIS COUNTENANCE DOTTH BEHOLD THE UPRIGHT".

Hints to the Village Preacher

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WHO WERE THEY?

The Zealots

In Luke chapter six, verse fifteen, one of our Lord's disciples is referred to as "Simon the Zealot", which seems to distinguish him as a member of the "Zealot" party which was active in Israel up until about A. D. 73. The Zealots were a strongly nationalistic group that was founded by Judas the Galilean in A. D. 6 when they revolted against Rome over the payment of tribute money to a pagan Emperor. These "zealous" Israelites interpreted this payment as treason against God who was the one and only true King of Israel.

They seem to have taken their name from following the example of Phineas, who, we are told in Numbers 25 verse 11, "was ZEALOUS for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel". As Phineas displayed zeal at that time of their national apostasy, so the Zealots would follow his example now that Israel was pressed under by the heel of Imperial Rome.

It is unlikely that Simon would have remained a true Zealot after his conversion to Christ as the Zealot policy was to overthrow the Roman rule even through bloodshed, a policy which finds no place in Christ's teaching. There are references to Zealot activities in such scriptures as Acts 21 verse 38, where Paul is questioned whether or not he is "that Egyptian which ... led out four thousand men that were murderers (Assassins)?" This group of Zealots got their name from the fact that they armed themselves with concealed daggers for the "assassination" of Israel's enemies.

The Nazarites

An Old Testament party of "separatists" who concentrated themselves to the Lord by the taking of certain vows. The name means to "separate" or "consecrate", or may mean "the crown of God", which would probably refer to the Nazarite's uncut hair which was one of the vows. The Nazarites were also called to abstain from strong drink and were prohibited from coming into contact with a dead body. When any of these prohibitions was violated the Nazarite was called to reconsecration. At the end of the period of service to Jehovah - this could be a week, or a month, or a year, or a life - the Nazarite went into the temple and cut off his hair and burned it.

One of the most outstanding Nazarites was, of course, Samson. As he had been "separated" for life, the shaving of his hair when he had fallen to the wiles of Delilah constituted a broken vow and thus resulted in the Lord's Spirit being removed from him.

There are a few later references in the Acts of the Apostles to men taking a vow similar to the Nazarite. Paul, in Acts 21 verse 23, performs this act for four men, and in Chapter 18 verse 18, shaves his own head "for he had a vow".

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BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By
Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

What did you get at Christmas? Lots and lots of nice things, I hope. I wonder how many of those things have broken already. None! Oh, I'm sure some of you have some broken pieces lying in your toy cupboard. You see, nothing really lasts forever. Mary's new dress will wear out. John's football is a good one, but it won't last very long before there is a tear in it. Even mother's new pots and pans, and even daddy's new motor car - if he has been fortunate enough to get a smashing present like that for Christmas - will one day end up in the scrapyard.

It's lovely to receive all the wonderful gifts that we do receive at Christmas time, and it's nice to know that we have so many kind friends who love us enough to give us all these things. But, boys and girls, here is the first lesson I want to teach you as we begin this new year - that nothing lasts forever. All the toys and clothes, books and sweets are only material things, and they will soon get broken, or wear out, or be finished with. Nothing lasts forever.

And yet, there is something that does last forever; and that's why we must remember to be specially thankful to God for the most wonderful Gift of all. Now, what was that? Yet, it was Jesus of course. The bible says, "God so loved the world that He gave his only Begotten Son". There is God acting like a friend and giving us something. He is giving us Jesus to be our Saviour.

That's what Christmas means; it means that on that very first Christmas day when Jesus was born, God was giving us his PRESENT. Perhaps you felt very close to Jesus when the carols were being sung and when we were all thinking about the manger, and the wise men, and the shepherds keeping their flocks by night. But, we must go on feeling close to Him, and living close to Him, for, remember, He is not like the other gifts, to keep for a few days and then to forget about. But, He is the gift that lasts forever.

Have you received Jesus as a gift from God, boys and girls? If not, then you can ask God today, at the start of this New Year, to send Jesus into your heart forever.

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Begotten Son"

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******* I'M NOT EXTREME! *******

I REALLY WANT TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT,
And walk according to my light;
But Oh! I do not care to be
At all extreme.

I'm saved but still I'll court the world,
A little fund in life's short whirl;
I'll just enjoy it in my teens,
I'm not extreme.

Those people who would hew a line,
And seek to walk in paths divine;
According to the former days,
Are TOO extreme.

Have they not heard that times have changed,
And "separation's" not much named
Amongst us in our gatherings, lest
We get extreme.

No! No! Two great extremes I see,
When gazing on the accursed tree;
Extreme of love for sinful men -
That's GOD'S EXTREME.

And look, I see the other here,
The world in all its varied sphere;
The hatred shown for God's own Son -
That's MAN'S EXTREME.

On which extreme then would I be?
As here He dies, who died for me?
I'd rather share my Saviour's fame -
Golgotha's shame.

W.H.F.

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