

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 48 issued May 2004

### Index

1. Prayer Life - Our Vital Christian Office — W. J. Seaton
2. Who Were They?
3. Gleanings in the Psalms — Psalm 13
4. Another Alarm to the Unconverted — Joseph Alleine
5. Boys and Girls — how many of you have been lost?
6. Six Rules for Young Christians — Brownlow North

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Web Address of the Magazine - [www.wicketgate.co.uk](http://www.wicketgate.co.uk)

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# Prayer Life - a Vital Christian Office

## (From the Wicket Gate - 1969)

I would like to bring before you a few questions regarding our prayer life which is a most vital of all our Christian offices and offer some words of encouragement and exhortation.

One of the great gifts that our Saviour obtained for us by His death on the Cross was the gift of "Priesthood". Protestantism boasts of this fact, and rightly so. We need no human "mediator" such as Rome has, but have a direct access into the very presence of God through the "blood of God's Son". What an affront, then, it must be in the sight of God when His people fail to avail themselves in all fulness of such a privilege and mercy.

When this is the case in our "individual" Christian living, then we have every right to examine our "calling and election"; for as Spurgeon once truly stated, "A prayerless person is a Christless person". However, it is with regard to our "corporate" prayer life - our prayer life as members of our own local Church - that I would like to see more concern exercised and shown.

These are days of great decline; churches are closing today - not just in some denominations that have drifted far from an evangelical faith, generally speaking; but churches are closing in ALL the denominations, Baptist included! One of our leading churches had now discontinued its Sunday evening service; and here is what I would like us to grasp hold of, it first of all discontinued its PRAYER MEETING! I believe I have marked for you on some occasions the steps of "backsliding"; let me remind you of those steps.

The first thing to go is the Prayer meeting; then goes the Sunday morning service, because this is usually classed as "ministry to the believers", and may sometimes include a challenge regarding the believer's prayer life; this leaves the "Gospel Service", so-called, and there many a cold Christian has eked out their spiritual existence until the world has claimed them for its own again. If this applies to any reader, then I have but one word, and it's "Back" - Back to the place where your feet started slipping!

Perhaps many people would be inclined to think that we, here in our own Church, have little to complain about as far as numbers at the Prayer Meeting are concerned, and this is probably true as present-day standards go. But, as minister of a Church, I am not concerned with a person's presence at the prayer meeting, but rather with the fundamental lack in their spiritual life that keeps them from the prayer meeting. I know there are many who have genuine reasons for not meeting with the Church in prayer; let me say, however, that

every reason must be able to stand before the absolute scrutiny of the all-seeing eye of God.

I have heard of some women in some churches who make the excuse that they can't come to the morning service because they have to stay at home and make the dinner. This is very feeble when we reflect on the fact that many women have no hesitation going "down-town for a hair-do" and leaving the dinner to simmer on the stove! Anyway, what harm would it do for the family to have to wait for three-quarters of an hour until the potatoes are boiled? Remember, the minister has to do that every week; if he didn't then his wife would never be at Church. The minister and his wife, if they have small children can't work on a "You go in the morning and I'll go in the evening" basis. Am I being critical? Perhaps, but, don't you see the point? If our excuses are so weak as to be obvious to our fellow-Christians, then how must they appear before the Lord Himself?

Now, hereon hangs the crux of the matter of "making our requests known unto God". We are NOT called to pray so as to please men, but to please God. It's God that sees. This serves both to exhort, and also to encourage. Remember the apostle Paul after he had been converted on the Damascus road and had been led in his blind condition to the house of one called Judas? "Arise", our Lord said to a man called Ananias, "and go into the street which is called straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for, BEHOLD HE PRAYETH". The Lord had his eye on Saul! He knew the street that Saul was in; He knew the name of the street - it was called Straight; He knew the house that Saul was in, in that street; He knew the name of the man who owned that house! "Thou God seest me"! And although, as we've already said, we don't pray as men-pleasers, nevertheless, what a witness to the world a praying Church can be.

Remember David Brainerd, the great missionary to the Red Indians? When he walked into an Indian encampment one morning he was greeted - much to his amazement - a kind of white god. What has happened? When the Redskins had gone out to "murder" him the night before, they had seen him in prayer; and as he prayed a rattlesnake had reared itself up in front of him to strike its deathblow, and then had fallen to the ground and slithered away. Just that one incident related to a praying man, but it opened the door of evangelism among those Red Indians and brought many sons to glory. Well does the Scriptures tell us that men should always pray and not faint.

**W. J. Seaton**

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# WHO WERE THEY?

(1) **Castor and Pollux.**

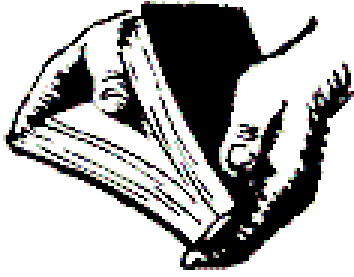
In Acts chapter 28 when Paul set sail again in verse 11, he set sail, we are told "... in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was CASTOR AND POLLUX". Castor and Pollux were the sons of Zeus in Greek mythology and were looked upon as the special guardians of seamen. This being a Greek ship - "of Alexandria", the figurehead was probably a carving of these twin protectors; or, possibly an image of each was fastened on either side of the ship.

(2) **The Rechabites.**

In Jeremiah 35 verses 5 to 10, we are given an account of Jeremiah the prophet setting some pots of wine before "the sons of the house of the Rechabites". These Rechabites refuse to drink the wine, however, and this is to count as a protest against the settled life that the Israelites have now entered into in the land of Caanan. Since leaving the wilderness, the Rechabites believed, the children of Israel had become a corrupt and faithless nation; and so, anything to do with this new settled life was avoided by the Rechabites. The vine growing, of which wine was a product, spoke of settlement, and so they would not touch it. They longed after the nomadic days of the wilderness wanderings and refused to build, or to live in houses, preferring the tents of the desert. Their founder was "Jonadab the son of Rechab". (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 10 verse 15)

(3) **Arcturus and his Sons.**

When the Lord "answered Job out of the whirlwind" in chapter 38 of the Book of Job, He asked him several questions; one of those questions is contained in verse 32 of that chapter; "Canst thou guide ARCTURUS WITH HIS SONS?" the Lord asks Job. ARCTURUS is the Old Testament name that was given to that constellation that we now call "The Great Bear" or the "Plough". The "sons" are probably the seven main stars in the constellation, or possibly the three stars that form the "tail of the bear", or "the handle of the plough". The American Standard Version of the Bible translates the verse "Canst thou guide the bear with her train?"



# Gleanings in the Psalms

## (Psalm 13)

The psalm cannot be referred to any especial event or period in David's history. All attempts to find it a birthplace are but guesses. It was, doubtless, more than once the language of that much tried man of God, and is intended to express the feelings of the people of God in those ever-returning trials that beset them. If the reader has never yet found occasion to use the language of this brief ode, he will do so ere long, if he be a man after the Lord's own heart. We have been wont to call this the "How Long Psalm". We had almost said the "Howling Psalm", from the incessant repetition of the cry "How Long?"

*C. H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 1. "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord...?"** There are many situations of the believer in this life in which the words of this psalm may be a consolation, and help to revive sinking faith. A certain man lay at the pool of Bethesda, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. A woman had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years before she was loosed. Lazarus all his life long laboured under disease and poverty till he was released by death and transferred to Abraham's bosom. Let every one, then, who may be tempted to use the complaints of this psalm, assure his heart that God does not forget His people; help will come at last, and, in the meantime, all things shall work together for good to them that love Him.

*W. Wilson*

**Verse 2. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?"** There is such a thing as to pore on our guilt and wretchedness, to the overlooking of our highest mercies. Such, for a time appears to have been the case of David. He seems to have been in great distress; and, as is common in such cases, his thoughts turned inward, casting in his mind what he should do and what should be the end of things. While thus exercised, he had "sorrow in his heart daily:" but, betaking himself to God for relief, he succeeded, trusting in His mercy, His heart rejoiced in His salvation (verse 5). There are many persons

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who, when in trouble imitate David in the former part of this experience: I wish we may imitate him in the latter.

*Andrew Fuller*

**Verse 3. "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God..."** Note the cry of faith: "O Lord MY God!" Is it not a very glorious fact that our interest in our God is not destroyed by all our trials and sorrows? We may lose our gourds, but not our God. The title deed of heaven is not written in the sand, but in eternal brass.

*C. H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 3. "Lighten mine eyes..."** A prayer fit for (1) every benighted sinner; (2) every seeker of salvation; (3) every learner in Christ's school; (4) every tried believer; (5) every dying saint.

*B. Davies (Hints to a Village Preacher)*

**Verses 4 and 5. "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest mine enemy say: 'I have prevailed against him'..."** If the Lord think it not good to give an outward delivery, faith will be content with a glimpse of God's countenance for the present; "Lighten mine eyes," saith he; that is, let me have some immediate comfort to uphold me in the hope of my delivery. It is death to a godly man who has seen "Him who is invisible" to be long without the sense of God's love ... as here: "Lighten mine eyes LEST I SLEEP THE SLEEP OF DEATH". The enemies of the godly feed themselves with the trouble of the godly ... "Lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death; LEST MINE ENEMY SAY: 'I HAVE PREVAILED AGAINST HIM'".

*David Dickson*

**Verses 5 and 6. "But I have trusted in Thy mercy ... I will sing unto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me"**. What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm we have seen him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but, in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our griefs and cares to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our "countenance will be no more sad".

*Matthew Henry*

**Verse 6. "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me"**. Faith keeps the soul from sinking under heavy trials, by bringing in former experiences of the power, mercy and faithfulness of God to the afflicted soul. Hereby was the Psalmist supported in distress. Oh, saith he, remember what God hath done, both for thy outward and thy inward man: He hath not only

delivered thy body when in trouble, but He hath done great things for thy soul. He hath brought thee out of a state of black nature, entered into a covenant relation with thee, made His goodness pass before thee; He hath taught thee to pray and many times hath heard thy prayers and thy tears. He hath not brought thee out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and put a new song in thy mouth, and made thee to resolve never to give way to such unbelieving thoughts and fears again? And how unbecoming it is for thee now to sink in trouble.

*John Willison*

## **ANOTHER ALARM TO THE UNCONVERTED**

It may be you are ready to say "What does this stir mean?" And are apt to wonder why I follow you with such earnestness, still ringing the same lesson in your ears, that you should repent and be converted. But I must say to you, as Ruth to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee".

I would gladly let you alone, but would you not have me concerned for you, when I see you ready to perish? As the Lord liveth, before whom I am, I have not the least hope of seeing your face in heaven except you be converted. I utterly despair of your salvation except you will be prevailed with thoroughly to turn and give up yourself to God in holiness and newness of Life. Has God said: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God", and yet, do you wonder why your ministers labour so earnestly for you? Do you think it strange that I am in earnest with you to follow after holiness, and long to see the image of God upon you? Never did any, nor shall any enter into heaven by any other way but this.

What is it that you count necessary? Is your bread necessary? Is your breath necessary? Then your conversion is much more necessary. Indeed, this is the one thing necessary. Your possessions are not necessary; you may sell all for the pearl of great price, and yet be a gainer by the purchase. Your life is not necessary; you may part with it for Christ to infinite advantage. Your reputation is not necessary; you may be reproached for the name of Christ, and yet be happy; yes, you may be much more happy in reproach than in repute. But your

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conversion is necessary; your salvation depends on it; and is it not needful in so important a matter to take care? On this one point depends your making or marring to all eternity.

**Joseph Alleine**

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**The Gospel:**

You may pay for the book in which the Gospel is contained; for the Church or chapel in which it is preached, for the minister who preaches it to you ... but, the Gospel itself is as free as the light that shines, as the rain and dew which fall from above; as the air which you inhale and as every other blessing of God -

**John Bate.**

**"Repent and believe the Gospel".**

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**By  
Mrs Seaton**

Hello Boys and Girls,

I wonder how many of you at some time have been lost! You know, Jesus was once lost - at least, Mary and Joseph thought that He was lost!

It all happened when Jesus was twelve years old. He went with His parents up to Jerusalem to pay the taxes along with lots of other people from Nazareth. What a wonderful week that must have been for Him. All the services in the Temple, all the crowds in the streets, and the Roman soldiers marching past. All the marvellous sights to be seen, but, at last it was time to go home.

When they were ready to start, Jesus was nowhere to be seen; but, as they were to march in a long procession with their friends and neighbours, Mary and Joseph just thought that He was with some of them, and went on their way.



When it came near evening, they began to wonder why He stayed so long and so they went up and down among their friends asking if anyone had seen Jesus. (Just the same as your mummies and daddies sometimes look for you when it is tea-time). But, no! No one had seen Jesus all day, and so, they realised that He must have been left behind in Jerusalem. What a shock for Mary and Joseph.

Immediately they started off back to Jerusalem - and there they found Him. Not at the fairground or at the "sweetie" stalls, or watching the soldiers! But, in the Temple - in Church - listening to the ministers and asking them questions. His parents were amazed and asked Him why He had not gone with the others; this is what Jesus said: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Now, of course, He didn't mean Joseph, who was His earthly father; He meant God, for Jesus was God's Son.

The Bible tells us that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man". That means that as He was growing up from a boy into a man He sought always the ways of God, and was also good and kind to those around Him. What a lot Jesus can teach us, even yet, if each one of us, boy or girl - and grown-ups too, just trusts in Him to be our Saviour and Guide and Friend.

"O dearly, dearly has He loved,  
And we must love Him too;  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do."

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## **Six Short Rules for Young Christians**

(By Brownlow North)

1. Never neglect daily private prayer; and when you pray, remember that God is present, and that He hears your prayers. (Heb. 11:6).
2. Never neglect daily private Bible reading; and when you read remember that God is speaking to you, and that you are to believe and act upon what He says. I believe all backsliding begins with the neglect of these two rules. (John 5:39).
3. Never let a day pass without trying to do something for Jesus. Every night reflect on what Jesus has done for you, and then ask yourself, "What am I doing for Him"? (Matt. 5: 13-16)
4. If you are in doubt as to a thing being right or wrong, go to your room and kneel down and ask God's blessing on it. (Col. 3:17). If you cannot do this, it is wrong. (Roms. 16:23).
5. Never take your Christianity from Christians, or argue that because such and such people do so and so, therefore, you may. (2 Cor. 10:12). You are to ask yourself, "How would Christ act in my place"? And strive to follow Him (John 10:27)
6. Never believe what you feel, if it contradicts God's Word. Ask yourself, "Can what I feel be true if God's Word is true"? And if BOTH cannot be true, believe God and make your own heart the liar. (Roms. 3:4. 1 John 5:10-11).

### **NOTE:**

Brownlow North was a man greatly used of God in the great 1859 Revival that swept the North of Ireland. His grandfather was the Bishop of Winchester, who was the son of Lord North, and once Prime Minister of England. Brownlow North, then, was an aristocrat; but, as we well know, position has no bearing on a man's spiritual quality, and Brownlow North spent his days in godless living. "For forty-four years of my life," he tells us, "my object was to pass time pleasantly; so long as the day was spent agreeably I was satisfied". In 1854, God laid him low with a sever illness and raised him to life eternal to work the works of God. Two books give us an insight into the life and work of Brownlow North. "Wilt thou go with this man?" The story of his life; and "The Rich Man and Lazarus", which is a collection of the sermons which he preached during that great awakening in 1859.