

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 54 issued May 2005

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SECRET & SILENT LABOUR IN THE GOSPEL

The Pastor's Letter (September 1969)

Dear Friends,

How good a thing it is when we can imitate the very kingdom of heaven itself and go about our work **secretly** and **silently**, (Like the leaven that was hid in the three measures of meal) to the glory of God.

It was the sin of the men and women of Babel, you may remember, that they desired to "make a name for themselves". And, in a different sense, that seems to be a pre-occupation with the world yet. But, the believer in Christ should be, not concerned with getting a name on earth, but with getting a name in heaven — aye, with remembering that he already has a name in heaven! How often the apostle Paul points us to this "blessed anonymity" that each of us should ever be seeking after. "Those women which laboured with me in the gospel," he writes on one occasion; "no names, no pack drill," as we would say today. "And other of my fellow-labourers", he writes again, "whose names are in the book of life".

Here is the all important thing: that we would out of gratitude as those who have already received a name in their Saviour; and that we labour as secretly and silently as possible least any of the glory be ascribed to us and not to the One who has established our names in the heavens. Our Lord spoke of those who performed their religious deeds in the open for all to see, and said of them: "They have their reward". The name that they received for their labours of piety was the only reward that they would receive, for it was the only reward that they sought "**But Ye,**" said the Lord, as He pointed to His own, "when ye do your works, do them in secret; and your Father which seeth in secret, will reward you openly."

What a blessed principle of Divine dealing with us that is. What an encouragement to labour on, even though misunderstood at times, and unheralded for the work that is being done where no eye, save the eye of the Lord, can see. Mordecai's good deed was soon forgotten of men - if many had even heard of it, in the first place; but it had been registered in "the book of the records of the chronicles" of the king, and Mordecai received the reward of this "secret service" at the Lord's appointed time.

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Let's just finish with the word of the following poem: -

WHO?

1 What was the name of that wee boy, Who gave himself to Christ's employ, And offerd up the fish and bread, With which the multitude was fed?	2 And who that noble unknown one, Who bowed the neck to God's own Son, And gave his beasts as offerings, To bear the glorious King of Kings?
3 And yet again, what was the name, Of he who lives in gospel fame, The one who gave that upper room, Where Christ foretold His awful doom?	4 And leaping forward through the years, We hear the words, "Why have ye fears?" The words that won the great John Owen, Yet he who preached them's still unknown!
5 And see those wives of Bedford town, They speak of God 'till sun's gone down, But what their names we've never learned, Yet through them Bunyan's heart was turned.	6 And with abundant names we're armed, When Wesley's hear was "strangely warmed", There's Luther, Romans, Aldersgate, But he who spoke we can't relate.
7 And who that bold unlettered one, Who cried, "Look unto God's own Son," When Spurgeon "Looked" and saw the Lord? Search history's page, there's not a word.	8 Unknown, unheralded, unsung, Yet in the ladder, placed a rung, Of God's Elect, as they were moved, And silently, their service proved.

Yours in Christ,
W.J. Seaton
(September 1969)

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A Sermon for
Parents
by
J.C. Ryle

Part 4

"Train up a child in
the way that he
should go".
Proverbs 22:6

Train your children to a habit of prayer.

Parents, if you love your children, do all that lies in your power to train them up to a habit of prayer. Show them how to begin. Tell them what to say. Encourage them to persevere. Remind them if they become careless and slack about it. This, remember, is the first step in religion which a child is able to take. Long before he can read you can teach him to kneel by his mother's side and repeat the simple words of prayer and praise, which she puts in his mouth. I cannot praise that mother among you who never looks after this most important part of her child's daily life herself. You are little wiser than the bird described in Job "which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them; or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as thought they were not hers; her labour is in vain without fear". Job 39 verse 14 forward. Prayer is, of all habits, the one which we recollect the longest. Many a grey-haired man could tell you how his mother used to make him pray in the days of his childhood.

Train them also to habits of diligence, and regularity about the public means of grace.

Tell them of the duty and privilege of going to the House of God and joining in the prayers of the congregation. Tell them that wherever the Lord's people are gathered together, there the Lord Jesus is present in an especial manner, and that those who absent themselves must expect, like the Apostle Thomas, to miss a blessing.

Train them, too, to the habit of faith.

I mean by this, you should train them up to believe what you say. Who can tell the misery that unbelief has brought into the world? Unbelief made Eve eat the forbidden fruit; she doubted the truth of God's Word, "Ye shall not surely die."

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Unbelief made the old world reject Noah's word, and so perish in sin. Unbelief kept Israel in the wilderness ... unbelief made the Jews crucify the Lord of Glory - they believed not the voice of Moses and the prophets though read to them every day. And unbelief is the reigning sin in man's heart down to this very hour. Unbelief in God's promises - unbelief in god's threatenings - unbelief in our own sinfulness - unbelief in our own danger.

Train your children to a habit of implicit faith and confidence in your word.

BEWARE OF LOT'S CHOICE.....

....."And Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom" Genesis chapter 13 verse 12

1. Remember this in choosing a dwelling-place, or residence. It is not enough that the house is comfortable - the situation good - the air fine - the neighbourhood pleasant - the rent or price small - the living cheap. There are other things yet to be considered. You must think of your immortal soul. Will the house you think help you towards heaven or hell? Is the gospel preached within an easy distance? Is Christ crucified within reach of your door? Is there a real man of God near who will watch over your soul? I charge you, if you love life, not to overlook this. *Beware of Lot's choice.*
2. Remember this in choosing a calling, a place, a profession in life. It is not enough that the salary is high - the wages good - the work light - the advantages numerous - the prospects of getting on most favourable. Think of your soul, your immortal soul. Will it be prospered or drawn back? Will you have your Sundays free, and be able to have one day in your week for your spiritual business? I beseech you by the mercies of God to take heed what you do. Make no rash decision. Look at the place in every light - the light of God as well as the light of the world. Gold may be bought too dear. *Beware of Lot's choice.*
3. Remember this in choosing a husband or wife, if you are unmarried. It is not enough that your eye is pleased - that your tastes are met - that your minds find congeniality - that there is amiability and affection - that there is a comfortable home for life. There needs to be something more than this. There is a life yet

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to come. Think of your soul, your immortal soul, Will it be helped upwards or dragged downwards by the union you are planning? Will it be made more heavenly or more earthly - drawn nearer to Christ or to the world? Will its religion grow in vigour, or will it decay? I pray you, by all your hopes of glory, allow this to enter into your calculations. "Think," as old Baxter said, and "think, and think again," before you commit yourself. "Be not unequally yoked." (2nd Cor. 6:14). Matrimony is nowhere named among the means of conversion. *Remember Lot's choice.*

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

I wonder how many of you have travelled to England by bus or car? If you have you will perhaps have seen a hotel which says - "This is the first hotel in England." You will then know that you have crossed over the border and are now in England. On your way back home you will come to the SAME hotel, but the sign that you will see this time will say - "This is the last hotel in England."

That's strange, isn't it? Its not really, it just depends which direction you're going. And so it is with this time of year which we call Easter when Jesus was taken and nailed to the Cross on which He died. If we look BACK from that cross what we see is Jesus being born and living a good life. However, if we look FORWARD from the cross what we see is Jesus rising from the dead and living for evermore. Like the hotel, boys and girls, it all depends from what direction you are looking. We should look BACK from the cross and remember all that Jesus did while He was on the earth, and especially how He died on the cross that we might have our sins forgiven.

But we must look FORWARD from the cross and remember that although Jesus died there He rose again from the grave and is now alive for evermore.

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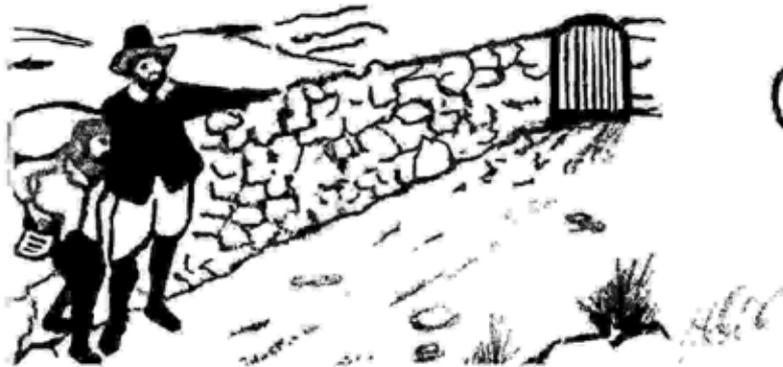
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"Jesus Christ is risen today,
Our triumphant holy day;
Who did once upon the cross,
Suffer to redeem our loss.

Hymns of praise then let us sing
Unto Christ, our Heavenly King;
Who endured the cross and grave,
Sinners to redeem and save.

For the pains which He endured,
Our salvation have secured;
Now above the sky He's King,
Where the angels ever sing.

Regards,
Mrs Seaton



John Bunyan informs us that the "narrow way" in which Christian was to go to reach the Celestial City was "fenced on either side by a wall that was called Salvation". In other words, there is only one way to reach heaven and rest for your soul at last, and that is by remaining within the confines of God's one and only way of Redemption.

As Christian walked that "narrow way", however, he was soon joined by two other travellers who confessed to him that they hadn't come on to the path via the way of the Wicket Gate and the Cross, but had climbed in over the wall. The names of these two travellers, according to Bunyan, were **Formalist and Hypocrisy**; and the lesson that Bunyan places before us is this, that along the road of our christian pilgrimage we will often meet with those who have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof". Two such were Formalist and Hypocrisy.

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Formalist and Hypocrisy, we are told, "were born in the Land of Vain Glory"; i.e. they were religious because it placed them high in the esteem of others. The Formalist is the man who religiously goes to church, reads his Bible, gives thanks at meals, and does a dozen and one other things even though none of these things works any change in his life. The Hypocrite is a "journeyman" Formalist - one who has "served his time" at the trade. He is the "**Hypocrites**" - the "play-actor"; and even though he is a spiritual pauper, he can play the part of a spiritual king to the deceit of himself and others.

Let us look at these three as Bunyan pictures them coming to the bottom of **The Hill called Difficulty**. "There were also in the same place", we read, "two other ways besides that which came straight from the Wicket Gate: one turned to the left hand and the other to the right at the bottom of the hill; but the narrow way led right up the hill..." This is what distinguishes the true Christian way of salvation from all other ways. The Christian way - the "narrow way" - leads only up and over the Hill Difficulty. And here too is what distinguishes the true Christian Pilgrim from all other travellers - from the Formalist and the Hypocrite. Formalist and Hypocrisy, Bunyan tells us, set out on the two paths that led "round" the hill; the name of one was "danger" and the name of the other "destruction"; but the Christian Pilgrim surveyed the peak, and then resolutely set off to reach the summit and the other side.

"The hill, though high, I covet to ascend", he sang;
"The difficulty will not me offend.
For I perceive," he says, "the way of life lies here".

Let us look now at how the Christian Pilgrim approached, scaled, and overcame the Hill Difficulty. "At the bottom of the hill", we are told, "there was a spring". And before Christian even dares to set a foot towards the summit of Hill Difficulty, he must, first of all, refresh and fortify himself for the climb by drinking "at the springs of water" that the Lord has provided for the travelling pilgrim; Isaiah 49 verse 10. "About the midway to the top of the hill", we are next told, "was a pleasant arbour, made by the Lord of the hill for the refreshment of weary travellers". And in this "arbour of ease" Pilgrim sets himself down to rest.

Let us learn three main lessons from this climb of Christian's, for there are three words for us here. There is a word of Comfort, a word of Encouragement, and a word of Warning for those believers who now find themselves confronted with a Hill Difficulty.

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A word of Comfort in the fact that we are told that the hill was the property of the Lord; even our difficulties are under the control of Him who worketh all things for the good of His people.

A word of Encouragement, too, for in the midst of that difficulty the Lord of the hill has provided an "arbour of ease" - a time of respite, surely, for those who are burdened.

A word of Warning, a real word of Warning in the fact that this "arbour" - this shelter - this time of relief is given so that we might strengthen ourselves in order to **complete** the climb, and it must not be used as a place where we lay off to "watch and be sober".

Those who are familiar with the Pilgrim's Progress will know that this is what happened to the Pilgrim Christian. He sat down and he began to examine the "Roll" that had been given him at the Cross, i.e. the assurance of salvation; and perhaps he became over-confident, for he fell into a deep sleep. And when he awoke and started on his journey again he soon discovered that he had, in fact, lost his "Roll" - he had lost his Assurance of Salvation and was unable to continue his journey until he had retraced his steps and searched for his "Roll" again. How many Pilgrims has this happened to? And where is that blessed assurance that they once enjoyed? So often, back in the arbour that was abused and where they slumbered in the things of their salvation. "But who can tell", asks Bunyan, "How joyful this man was when he had gotten his Roll again?"



Gleanings from the Psalms

(Psalm 18 Concluded)

Verse 25. "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright". Every man shall have his meat weighed on his own scales, his corn meted out in his own bushel, and his land measured with his own rod. No rule can be more fair; to ungoldly men more terrible, or to the generous more honourable. How would men throw away their light weights and break their

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short yards, if they could but believe that they themselves are sure to be in the end the losers by their knavish tricks.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 28. "For thou wilt light my candle..." The metaphor of the whole verse is founded upon the dolorous nature of darkness and the delightfulness of light. The lighting of the lamp is a cheerful moment in the winter's evening, but the lifting up of the light of God's countenance is happier far. It is said that the poor in Egypt would stint themselves of bread to buy oil for their lamps, so that they may not sit in darkness; we could well afford to part with all earthly comforts if the light of God's love could but constantly gladden our souls.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 29. "For by thee I have run through a troop..." David ascribes his victories to God, declaring that, under His conduct, he had broken through the wedges of his enemies, and had taken by force their fortified cities. Thus we see that, although he was a valiant warrior and skilled in arms, he arrogates nothing to himself.

John Calvin

Verses 37 and 38. "I have pursued mine enemies ... they are fallen under my feet."

"Oh, I have seen the day,
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
'My trust is in the Lord;'
My soul has quelled a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose".

John Newton

Verse 41. "They cried but there was none to save them..." Sad examples there are enough of concerning the truth of this prophecy. Of Esau it is written that he "found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears". (Heb. 12:17) But, most appropriate to this passage it is written of Saul: "When he enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." (1 Sam. 28:6). And therefore, Jeremiah the prophet warns us: "Give glory

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to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains", as Saul's feet indeed stumbled upon the dark mountains of Gilboa. - "They cried, but there was none to save them; Even unto the Lord", but he answered them not." But, they cried unto him, it has been well remarked, not through a Mediator; but by their own merits, and in their own name, and so cried in vain.

J. M. Neale

Verse 41. "They cried ... even unto the Lord..." Nature prompts men in an extremity to look up for help. But, as it is the prayer of the flesh for ease and not of the spirit for grace, therefore, God hears it not.

John Trapp

Verse 46. "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted".

- (1) Honours DIE; Pleasures DIE; The World DIES - BUT, The Lord liveth.
- (2) My flesh is as SAND; my Fleishy Life - strength, glory, etc. Is as a WORD WRITTEN on SAND - BUT, "Blessed be my ROCK".
- (3) Let OUTWARD SALVATION vanish; Let the SAVED be crucified, - BUT, Let the God of our salvation be EXALTED.

This Lord is

MY ROCK; this God is MY SALVATION.

Peter Sterry

Verse 46. "The Lord Liveth..." A godly woman on the death of her child consoled herself and her family with this word - "The Lord Liveth". Soon her second child died, but she did not waver in her faith, but added comfort to comfort for herself and her husband and remaining child - "Comforts die, but the Lord liveth", she was heard to repeat. Shortly after, her dear husband was also taken, and the poor woman sat down overwhelmed and oppressed with sorrow. So she sat until the one remaining child came to her side: "Is the Lord now dead, Mother", the child asked; "is God dead?" "THE LORD LIVETH", she was enabled to say, "The Lord Liveth".

*From Oliver Heywood's
"Sure Mercies of David".*

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