

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Edition 59 issued March 2006

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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible With the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham

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The Christian A Citizen of Heaven

(The Pastor's Letter April 1970)

In these days when nationalistic feelings seem to be running so high – be it Northern Ireland, or South Africa, or where-have-you it surely becomes the Christian to remember that, first and foremost, his "citizenship is in heaven." (Philippians chapter 3 verse 20) One of the features of each and every one of us who profess the Name of Jesus in these days seems to be the absence of any real conception of the glories of heaven and how our lives should be governed by the realisation that "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

The apostle Paul drew a vivid picture for the Philippian believers when he reminded them of this very fact from their own situation. He has been saying some very hard things about those who were "the enemies of the cross of Christ," and has been contrasting them with the faithful apostles whom he has been exhorting the church at Philippi to emulate. And one of the features of these "enemies of the cross" is that "they mind earthly things." They are all taken up with the things of this life and they have no eye whatsoever for spiritual and heavenly business. But, says Paul in that twentieth verse that we quoted above, "Our citizenship (our conversation) is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

How this must have struck a familiar note in the hearts and minds of these believers who were also inhabitants of this city of Philippi, for, although situated in the region of Macedonia, Philippi was a "Roman" colony and the Philippian people, in general, gloried in the honour of Roman citizenship and all that it contained in those days of Rome's national grandeur. Although born in Philippi, they were, nevertheless, citizens of Rome. Their names appeared on the imperial register of that city, and they were governed under the laws and legislations of Rome, and enjoyed its privileges. Above all, to many citizens of Philippi, Rome was the place where their lord and saviour dwelt – for so the Emperor of Rome was considered by many – and at a moment's notice he would muster his Imperial forces and dispatch them should any danger threaten the well-being of those under his care.

How vividly, then, must Paul's comparison have shone into the hearts and minds of the Philippian believers. Oh yes, they were citizens of the world, by

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nature; but, by grace, they had been "born again from above," so that they were now "heavenly" citizens and their "citizenship" was in heaven. Were not their names registered "in glory" – in the Lamb's Book of Life? And was it not heaven's laws and legislations that truly governed and ruled their lives? Was the Emperor, indeed, a saviour to the worldly-minded man or woman in the streets of Philippi? But, was not their Jesus the Saviour of saviours and the King of all the kings of all the world, who would hear the cry of His people before they cried, and would answer from heaven His dwelling place, while they were yet speaking? Heaven was the "capital" city of the Elect of God at Philippi, just as Rome was the capital to the other inhabitants. The church at Philippi was a "heavenly" colony, and what threw the believers into contrast with the unbelievers – the friends of Christ into contrast with "the enemies of the cross of Christ" – in this portion of Paul's letter, was the contrasting attitudes to heaven and earth. On the one hand, there were those who "minded earthly things;" on the other, those whose "citizenship" was "in heaven."

How valid the lesson for us today, as in every day. Is it not true that, in so many ways, we have lost the light of heaven from our eye of faith? The "voice of our beloved" no longer effectively beckons our hearts to "rise up... and come away." We know little of Bunyan's "Mr Weary-of-the-World", for, of a truth, few of us are really and truly weary of the world. Would it not be the case that, if we knew more of our heavenly citizenship, we would less-often resort to the town of Carnal Policy for counsel and more to the enquiry rooms of Glory? Perhaps, it's because we know so little of the Christian warfare and struggle in our day that we have apparently so little desire for "that rest that yet remaineth unto the people of God." Perhaps, even, we don't really have a heart-longing to visit the place of our true nationality – even to see "The King there in His beauty."

Let us learn to pray: "Lord, in Thy mercy, Thou hast caused us to be made citizens of eternity; forbid that we should rest contented under any other flag or rule, but Thine alone."

When Robert Leighton was accused of not "speaking to the time;" that is, not always preaching about what was going on in the country; his reply silenced his accusers: "Gentlemen," he said, "when so many are speaking 'to the times', permit one poor brother to speak for eternity." And why not? We are not "nationals" of any nation on this earth, but nationals and citizens of heaven.

Yours Eternally,
W.J. Seaton

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Sweet Notes From The Song of Songs

(Part 3)

Chapter 1 verse 17 As the young Bride of the Song of Solomon had sought her Beloved by "the footsteps of the flock" how exposed she must have felt to the dangers of those mountains and valleys that separated her from her "Solomon." Having now found him, however, she is enabled to be at peace in his presence, and even the forest clearing in which they are now seated together speaks a word of warm comfort and protection to her soul. "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir," she says as she looks around at the strong cedars that surround her, and the overhanging firs that protect her from the scorching sun.

How alike this is to the believer in Christ when he feels the warm assurance of dwelling in his Beloved's house of salvation. The beams of that house are like cedars, and the rafters like firs. They are **STRONG BEAMS**. As the Lord called the children of Israel "out of the house of bondage" by "a mighty hand," so He led forth those "who were all their lifetime subject to (spiritual) bondage." He rode "forth conquering in the chariot of His Gospel," as old Thomas Watson puts it, "and He made the will, which stood out as a fort-royal, to yield and stoop to His grace." "Oh, it was a **MIGHTY** call," he says. And the beams are **SUPPORTING BEAMS**. For, having called us to Himself through the sovereign operations of His gracious Spirit, the Lord will keep us near Himself through the equally-sovereign workings of His blessed Son. "I give unto my sheep eternal life," says the Great Shepherd of the flock, "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." And they are **MATURED BEAMS**, for they have sheltered the Lord's people from the first generation and will do so from generation to generation. Abraham sat under them and so did David, and Daniel, and a host that no man can number. They are **DURABLE BEAMS**. They have never crumbled yet over one believer's head, and they never will.

"The work which Thy goodness began,
The arm of Thy strength shall complete;
Thy promise is 'Yea and amen,'
And never was forfeited yet."

What a blessing to dwell in such a such a house; and the entrance stands open yet: "I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

We would not think of speaking about God as a "chief", would we" But American Indians and African Negroes would. A chief is a leader, a protector, a saviour, a guide, and God is all this and more to His children. So the missionaries who teach the African people about God allow the children to think in their own language, and to use their own words.

Into one of the mission schools in Africa there came a new little girl. She had been left an orphan, and had no one to care for her, so a Christian Negro woman brought her to the mission home. At first she would not say a word. Perhaps she was afraid, or just shy, like most little girls.

One day, Beulah, for that was her name, was sitting with a group of girls sorting out reeds for basket making. One of the teachers was nearby and heard her say in a low voice: "Do you speak every day like we did this morning?" You see, Beulah had been at early morning worship and had heard the singing and the prayers. She did not understand and she thought it queer just to speak out into the air as if someone was there who heard what was said, so she asked "Do you speak every day like we did this morning?" "Oh yes," said one of the girls, "and in the evening too. You see, we are the children of a chief. In the morning we go to His court to greet Him and to receive His blessing, and to hear His Word for today. Then all day we work and play in the fields of the chief. In the evening we come back to His court and sit around the fire and tell Him of the day's work. If we have done anything wrong we tell Him we are sorry, and He blesses us and forgives us, and we go to sleep."

I think this is a lovely way for these young Christians to think of God. I do hope Beulah thought so too and found out the truth that SHE could have her sins forgiven and receive God's blessing, and so have Him as HER Chief for ever and ever.

I trust that all you boys and girls will learn this great truth too.

May God bless you.



Where is The Mission Field?

**The following is an extract from
a letter written from these
shores by a "stranger".**

Dear Brother,

Just to write your name, think of you, warms my heart. It reminds me of the good times that we have had with our brethren at O..... as we have studied God's Word together and talked of the Lord's gracious dealings with us and sought Him in prayer – yes, and found Him too! But, you will wonder at my writing from Christian Britain about the Lord's dealings with us at home. Didn't I, and all of you, think that when I got here I'd be so full of the glories and joys of the Christians that I should be writing to encourage you by sharing my experiences, rather than that I should need to think back to the times at home in order to encourage myself.

But, Alas, so it is. Though let me say at once, I have met some noble and precious saints and my soul has been enriched just by being with them. But sadly, I have to tell you that these experiences have been the exception and not the rule. These people here, dear brother, do not seem to glory in coming together for prayer. I think of old granny G... walking twenty miles to our meetings, and all those who give up food and sleep to pray with us. It is not common to do this over here, it seems. It is the same with much of the preaching I hear. Many talk knowledgeably, but I don't get the feeling that what they say is real to them. The words are all right – almost too good – they are never overcome by the blinding reality that they are talking to perishing souls on the brink of eternity and addressing a dying, putrefying world; nor does the reality of glory and of our wonderful Lord seem to overwhelm them. But it has surprised me how little Christians seem to understand about the power of sensual temptations which we, in our country, are so aware of.

You would be surprised at the Christian women in mini-skirts, nylon blouses and painted faces. Also the amount they spend on themselves compared with what they give to the Lord's work. They are sometimes blind to what is SENSUOUS as compared with what is spiritual – you know the difficulties that

many in our country have found over this. But I didn't expect in Britain. Yet you have only got to listen to what they call "gospel beat music" for it to remind you of the jungle beat we have turned our backs on as belonging to the god of this world and devilish, sensual. "Why do you listen to such devilish stuff I exclaimed one evening, hearing only the beat and not the words. "But it is about Jesus," said my companion. "The Lord Jesus," I said, "told us to worship; in spirit and in truth, not in carnality." My companion was offended and so was everyone else. My soul was grieved in my stupidity in speaking too quickly – me a coloured man, too. But yet was I not right in what I said?

Oh, dear brother, there is so much I could tell you sadly of unbelief in the churches who degrade the name of our Lord and Saviour and who deny God's Holy Word. There is so much confusion, too. We think there is a lot at home that has come through different mission societies, but here you see the source of all these confusions and it makes me sad. Even among those who profess to believe the whole Bible and to know the need of being born again, there is confusion. Sadly I have to say that many Christians I have met seem to have lost (the) vision today. They are aware of all the powers of ungodliness and of the secular world, and they seem to be apologetic and fearful and depressed instead of setting their eyes upon the unseen and speaking with power and authority.

Brother, we must not forget how much the people here have given us in the past nor the godly sacrifices they have made to send messengers of the Gospel to us. Let us praise God for all this, but do urge the churches at home to repay our great debt by giving ourselves to urgent prayer for those of our brethren and the churches in Britain who, rich as they are in so many ways, yet I fear, yes I deeply fear, have lost their first love.

"You'll not misunderstand me, brother, when I say that I feel am leaving a dead church in this land to return to one that is alive and loves the Lord."

From a missionary soon to complete his furlough and return to the "field."

"I'll need to get back to my own people on the field again. If I were in this country much longer they would burn me at the stake for my preaching."

Another missionary with forty years service overseas who was handed two-and-sixpence (22½p) "expenses" after speaking at a united woman's rally.



Sermon in Candles

By
C.H. Spurgeon



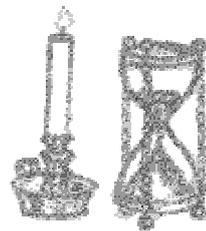
(Part 3)

I have a candle here and I want to light it. What shall I do? Before me I see a candle burning very brightly, and I will take a light from it. I have not succeeded. How is it that I have altogether failed? I cannot succeed in lighting my candle, and you are all laughing at me, and you whisper that I must be overmuch stupid to try to light a candle while an EXTINGUISHER is upon it. I subside. Do you not think that very many persons go with an extinguisher on to hear a minister preach?

"I do not like you, Dr. Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this I know, and know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell."

Just so. That is a very effective extinguisher. Once make up your mind to refuse a doctrine or a command, and you will not see it where God Himself has written it as with a sunbeam. Kick against a truth, and the arguments for it will seem to have no existence. Let prejudice of any sort wholly cover the candle of your mind, and, whatever you do, there is no likelihood of your receiving the light.

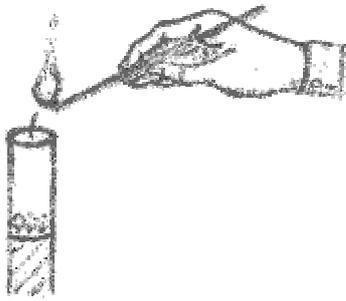
Here is an hour-glass and a candle. As the hour-glass runs and the candle burns, we mark how the time passes away. In the old Puritan pulpits there used to be an hour-glass, and the preacher was expected to preach as long as the sand of the hour-glass was running; which of course, was just an hour. A witty preacher, having on one occasion only reached to "eighteenthly" when the hour-glass had run out, and having thirty points to dilate upon, turned the machine upside down and cried "Brethren, let us have another glass."



Whether we preach or hear, time is hastening on. Our sands of life will soon run out ... we are being carried away by the resistless course of time. How it flies to

a man of middle age! How exceedingly fast to the aged! We may say of the hours, as of the cherubim, "each one had six wings." If everything is made secure by faith in the Lord Jesus, we need not wish it to be otherwise; for the faster time passes, the sooner we shall be at home with our Father and our God. We feel, as we watch the decreasing candle and the falling sand, that WE, at least, have no time which needs killing. What we have is all too little for our high and holy purposes. We want not cards, and dice, and scenic displays for a pastime: our time passes all too rapidly without such aids.

THIS TAPER which I hold in my hand is in itself a poor thing as an illuminator, but it has created quite a splendour in the room by the light which it has communicated others. Andrew was not a very great personage, but he called his

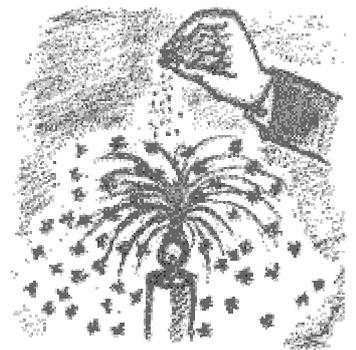


brother Peter, and led him to Jesus, and Peter was a host in himself. Never mind how small a taper you may be; burn on, shine at your best, and God bless you. You may lead on to grand results despite your feebleness. He that called Dr. John Owen is forgotten: I might almost say, was never known: he was a small taper, but what a candle he lighted!

These holy women as they talked together as they sat in the sun at Bedford were a blessing to John

Bunyan; but we know not the name of even one of them. Everywhere the hidden ones are used of the Lord as the means of lighting those who shine as stars in the churches.

I have a bottle here full of black material, which is to fall upon the flame of this candle. When I tell you that this bottle contains a quantity of steel-filings, you will at once prophesy that the light will be put out. Let us see what will happen! Why, well, instead of putting the candle out, I am making it disport itself as candle never did before. Here we have fireworks, which, if they do not quite rival those of Crystal Palace, have a splendour of their own. Do you not think that often when Satan tries to throw dust upon a Christian by slander, he only makes him shine the brighter. God grant that it may be so with us in all time of tribulation! May we turn the filings of steel into flashes of light!



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 23

There is no inspired title to this psalm, and none is needed, for it records no special event, and needs no other key than that which every Christian may find in his own bosom. C.H.S.

Verse 1. "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want." One mark of a good shepherd is skill to judge and know his sheep; and thus it is a usual thing to set a brand upon sheep, so that if they go astray the shepherd may seek them and bring them home again. Christ affirmeth the same thing of Himself: - "I know my sheep," He says, "and they follow me." John 10 verse 27. A good shepherd must also have a will to FEED his sheep according to his calling; the Lord above all others does this. But how earnest He is with Peter to "feed His sheep", urging him into it three times. A good shepherd is also to DEFEND his sheep. The Lord has every way provided for the safety and defence of His flock as David confesses in verse 4 of this psalm: - "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me". It is his duty, too, that if any of his sheep be weak and feeble, or his lambs young, for their safety he will bear them in his arms. The Lord is not wanting to us herein: "He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom". Isaiah 40 verse 11. And lastly, it is the place of a good shepherd to REJOICE when the strayed sheep is brought home. The Lord doth thus rejoice at the conversion of a sinner: - "Rejoice with me, for the sheep that was lost is found." Luke 15 verse 4.

Samuel Leith

Verse 2. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters". Here are many pastures, and every pasture rich so that it can never be eaten bare. Here are many streams, and every stream so deep and wide that it can never be drawn dry. The sheep have been eating in these pastures ever since the Lord had a church upon earth, and yet they are as full of grass as ever. The saints have been drinking at these streams ever since Adam, and yet they are brim full to this very day; and they will so continue until the sheep are above the use of them in heaven.

Ralph Robinson

Verse 3. "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." The subjects experimentally treated in

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this verse are – (1) The believer's liability to fall or deviate even within the fold of the church; or why should he need to be "restored"? (2) The promptitude of the Good Shepherd to interpose for his rescue – "HE restoreth my soul". (3) The Lord's subsequent care to "lead me in the paths of righteousness". (4) The reason why He will perform this rescue; all is resolved into the spontaneousness the supremacy, the omnipotence of grace. He will do all, for "His name's sake".

Thomas Dale

Verse 4. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me". Every word here has a wealth of meaning. "Yea, though I WALK..." As if the believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die, but still calmly WALKED with God. The dying place is called a "valley". The storm breaks on the mountain, but the valley is the place of quietude. The mountain is bleak and bare, but the valley is rich with golden sheaves, and many a saint has reaped more joy and knowledge when he came to die than he ever knew while he lived. And then, it is not the valley "of death" but the "valley of the SHADOW of death", for death in its substance has been removed and only the shadow of it remains. The shadow of a dog cannot bite: the shadow of a sword cannot kill: the shadow of death cannot destroy us. Let us not, therefore, be afraid – "I will fear no evil". If we had no troubles but REAL troubles, we should not have a tenth part of our present sorrows. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, but the psalmist was cured of the disease of fearing. "THOU ART with me." The little child out at sea on the storm is not frightened; it is asleep on its mother's bosom. It is enough that its mother is there. And it should be enough for the believer to know that Christ is with him. "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me". I will believe that thou reignest still. The rod of Jesse shall still be over me as the sovereign comfort of my soul.

C.H. Spurgeon

Verse 5. "Thou preparest a table ... my cup runneth over." Why doth the Lord make your cup run over, but other men's lips may taste the liquor?

William Secker

Verse 6. "Surely goodness and mercy ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever". Before he set down this resolution he numbered the many benefits received from the Lord. He had been led into "green pastures"; would be kept in "the valley of death", and before his "enemies"; therefore, to the end.

William Perkins