

The Wicket Gate Magazine

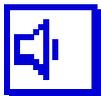
A Continuing Witness



Edition 60 issued May 2006

Index

1. Kennedy of Dingwall – The Pastor's Letter May 1970.
2. Gleanings in the Psalms – Psalm 24
3. Sermon in Candles (Part 4) – C.H. Spurgeon
4. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" – from Thomas Watson
5. Sweet Notes from the Song of Songs (Part 4)
6. The Day of their Salvation - Matthew Henry
7. Boys and Girls Page – Nicodemus the Pharisee



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

Kennedy of Dingwall

(The Pastor's Letter May 1970)

My dear friends,

In the year 1844 a young man was inducted to the charge of the Free Church of Scotland at Dingwall. His name was John Kennedy and he was soon to become one of the best-loved and most outstanding preachers of the gospel in his day. From far and wide the people flocked to attend on the ministry of "Kennedy of Dingwall," as he was to become known, and by the year 1870 a new church building had to be erected to accommodate the numbers who desired to be fed by the Lord at the hand of His servant.

Dr Kennedy's great friend and fellow comrade in arms, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, formally opened the Church on The 17th May 1870.

At the official opening of the church, a typically "Spurgeonic" incident took place which set the seal on the labours – past and future – of his dear friend and brother Dr. Kennedy. On making his way into the church on the evening of its opening, Mr Spurgeon paused by the wayside, stooped down, and plucked a small flower which he carried into the church with him. When he appeared in the pulpit, he appeared complete with flower in his buttonhole. Throughout the mighty sermon that he delivered, Spurgeon's flower remained in place, and it was not until the end of his message that he removed it and held it up before the great congregation. "You see I have been preaching," he said, "with this little flower in my buttonhole. It is called a 'Forget-me-not!'" He said, "and I would ask you to forget-me-not!" "However," he went on, "even though you should forget me, I would ask you not to forget the words of truth that I have spoken to you this evening."

How typical of Spurgeon. But, equally so, how much in keeping with the great Pastor of the Dingwall congregation, for he was, indeed, a stout defender of that very truth of God which Spurgeon had just unfolded and which he himself loved so dearly and prized so highly. Let me simply turn you over to some of the words of this man "Kennedy of Dingwall," and may the memory of all those who have "bought the truth" for us in the past, and "sold it not" stir us up to hold it as precious in our hearts and minds as they did. Listen to him here preaching on "Truths Defenders Vindicated."

"In times such as ours it is easy to seem a bigot, if one keeps a firm hold on truth, and is careful to have the seal of heaven upon his hope. No Christian can

be true and faithful now-a-days on whose brow the world shall not brand the name of bigot. But let him bear it. It is a mark of honour, though intended to be a brand of shame.

Ah, those old Covenanters of our native land were stern bigots in their day. It was well for Scotland that they were. They could part with their lives, but they would not sell the truth. It was this bigotry which won its liberty for their native land. The legacy bequeathed to it by these men of faith, whose only home was oft the mountain cavern, and to whom the snow was oft the only winding-sheet which wrapped their bodies when they had given their lives for Christ, was a richer boon than all ever given to it by the kings that occupied its throne, and by all men of wealth and title who owned its acres. O yes they were bigots these, in the judgment of scoffing sceptics and of ruthless persecutors, but not all the piles they could kindle could burn their bigotry out of them.

And these were stern bigots, too, according to the world's estimate, who headed the crusade against Antichrist, when, at the era of the Reformation, a fire from heaven had kindled in their hearts the love of truth. A pliant Melanchthon* would have bartered the truth for peace – the stern courage of a Luther was needed to prevent the sacrifice. In every age, from the beginning, when the cause of truth emerged triumphant from the din and dust of controversy, the victory was won by a band of bigots who were sworn to its defence."

Sincerely,
W.J. Seaton

*Melanchthon was the man who tried to find a "middle course" for the Reformers. He is remembered as a compromiser.

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 24)

This psalm may be called "A Psalm of Entrance", as it was most certainly used on that greatest of all occasions in the life of King David when he brought the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord up out of the house of Obed-Edom to the place that he had prepared for it at Jerusalem.

This psalm divides itself into two parts: -

- (1) The procession as it approaches Mount Zion – "the hill of the Lord". This is found in verses 1 to 6.
- (2) The procession as it enters the gates of Jerusalem. This is in verses 7 to 10.

As you can see, both these sections close with the Hebrew word "Selah". This simply means that we are now to pause and consider the words that we have been listening to. That procession that was bearing the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the Earth could never be held back; not even by the gates of Jerusalem themselves: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in". Naturally, the doorkeepers on the other side of the gates want to know by what authority this command is given. "Who is this king of glory?" they enquire. "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," comes the reply; "Lift up your heads, O ye gates..."

This is the HISTORIC setting of the psalm 24. But surely it points us with unfaltering finger to that day when our great "Captain of the Lord's Host led captivity captive" and ascended to the very gate of glory itself! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates ... and the king of glory shall come in". And they were "lifted up", and could never remain closed against Him.

Can we not invoke that same, strong Name of Christ that in the time ahead open before us to the praise of His grace? Surely we can; for has He not said that even the "gates of hell" shall never prevail against His church. "Lift up your heads," then, "O ye gates..."

Verse 1. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof...". Chrysostom tells us how he endured suffering under the Empress Eudoxia. "I thought: will she banish me? 'The earth is the Lord's'. Will she take away my goods? 'Naked came I into the world, and naked must I return.' Will she stone me? I remember Stephen. Will she behead me? John Baptist came into my mind". Thus it should be with every one that intends to live and to die with comfort. They must, as we say, lay up something for a rainy day. Store up promises and furnish themselves with experience of God's loving kindness.

John Spencer

Verse 2. "For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods". Providence and creation are the two legal seals upon the title-deeds of the great owner of all things. He who built the house and bears up its foundations has surely a first claim upon it. Let it be noted, however, upon what insecure foundations all terrestrial things are founded. Founded on the seas!

Established on the floods! Blessed be God the Christian has another world to look forward to, and rests his hope upon a more solid foundation than this poor world affords.

C. H. Spurgeon

AN INESCAPABLE QUESTION – Verse 3. "Who shall ascent into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place?"

AN INESCAPABLE ANSWER – Verse 4. "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord".

AN INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION – "Lord, no man of himself, then, shall ever stand at peace in Thy presence, for Thy Word has said that there is none righteous, no not one! None with clean hands; none with pure hearts."

BUT AN INESCAPABLE FACT – "ye are accepted IN THE BELOVED".

"Oh, I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved's mine,
He brings a poor vile sinner into His house of wine;
I stand upon His merit; I know no other stand;
Not e'en where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land".

AN INESCAPABLE ENQUIRY – Am I Christ's and is He mine?

Verse 10. "Who is this king of glory ...?" And Christ has a name written upon Him: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS". "Selah." – Pause and consider.



Sermon in Candles

By
C.H. Spurgeon



(Part 4)



Here is a candle which is in a lantern of a tolerably respectable sort; at least, it was respectable long ago, and you might not now have noticed its forlorn condition if it had not been for the candle within. So soon as you place a light within, the imperfections of the lantern are shown up; and it is the same with human

characters. Many a man would have seemed a decent sort of fellow if he had not professed to be a Christian; but his open profession of religion fixed many eyes upon him, and his imperfections were at once observed by all observers. He who unites with a church and takes upon himself the name of Christ claims a higher character than others; and if he is not true to his profession, his inconsistency is marked, and very justly so. How often do we see that an unconverted man may steal a horse, but a Christian must not even look over the hedge at it! That which is winked at in a man of the world is a grave fault in a Christian. Prominent persons are looked at through microscopes. The more light you have the more will your faults be shown up and observed. We have heard of a wonderful preacher of whom they said that he preached so well and lived so badly that when he was in the pulpit, they thought he ought never to come out of it; but when he was out of the pulpit they changed their minds, and sorrowfully concluded that he ought never to go into it again.

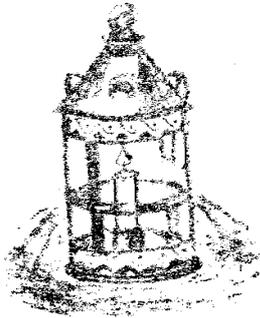
Butchers, it seems, were once accustomed to do their work with a candle fastened upon their foreheads thus – There is an old story of one who had lost his candle and travelled all around his premises searching for it by its own light! The parable is this: a person full of doubts and fears about his personal condition before God is searching for grace within, by the light of that very grace for which he is looking. He is fearfully anxious because he can see no trace of gracious anxiety in his mind. He feels sad because he cannot feel sad. He repents because he cannot repent. He has the candle on his forehead and is seeing by the light of it, and yet he is searching for that very light, without which he could not search at all.



Here is a sputtering candle. – (I can give a specimen of it in actual fact, but I do not know how to sketch the sputter on paper). You can light the thing, but it seems to spit at you, and crackle as if in a bad temper. We once had among us a good brother, who would always give and give generously too; but he took the money out in grumbling. He thought there were too many appeals; he thought that the thing ought to be provided for in another way; he thought – in fact he seemed to be full of discontented thoughts; but he always ended up by saying "There's my share of it." Our sputtering candle has now got over his weakness, for he has burned out his damp bit; and whenever you or I come to a cantankerous half hour, may we get through it as fast as possible. Go into your growlery and get it over: better still, go into the secret place and get it under.

Here is a common lantern. The wind may blow, but the candle is safe within. The groom can cross the stable yard in a shower of rain or in a fall of snow

when his light is thus safe-guarded. On board ship also, the lantern is of utmost use; for even a gale of wind will not blow out the candle which is secure in a good lantern.



And surely God will preserve His own Gospel though Popes and monks, men of "modern thought", and theoretical scientists blow at its candle with all the fury of fiends. Burn on, O sacred Light, that by thee men may be guided to the haven of rest!

The Providence of God is the great protector of our life and usefulness, and under the Divine care we are perfectly safe from every danger.

"Plagues and deaths around me fly;
Till He please I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love see fit."

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation

Satan, in tempting, observes the temper and constitution. Satan will not tempt contrary to the natural disposition and temperament: he makes the wind and tide go together; whichever way the natural tide of the heart runs, that is the way that the wind of temptation blows.

Satan tempts to evil by them that are good; thus he gives poison in a golden cup. He tempted Christ by Peter. Peter dissuades Him from suffering. Master, pity Thyself. Who would have thought to have found the tempter in the mouth of an apostle?

If Adam in a few hours sinned himself out of Paradise, how soon would we sin ourselves into hell, if we were not kept by a greater power than our own! But God puts underneath His everlasting arms. Christian, canst thou not believe that evil which is in thy heart, and which will break forth suddenly, if God should leave thee? If God leave a man to himself, how suddenly and scandalously may sin break forth in the holiest of men on the earth! "I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37). A wandering heart needs a watchful eye.

If you would not be overcome by temptation, be humble in your own eyes. They are nearest falling who presume on their own strength. The doves, says Pliny, take pride in their high flying, till at last they fly so high, that they become a prey to the hawk. So men when they fly high in pride and self-confidence, they become a prey to the tempter.

Satan doth not tempt God's children because they have sin in them, but because they have grace in them. Had they no grace he would not disturb them, for where he keeps possession all is in peace: "When the strong man armed keepeth his goods, his goods are at peace." A thief will not assault an empty house, but where he thinks there is treasure. Though to be tempted is a trouble, yet to think WHY you are tempted is a great comfort.

From Thomas Watson.

Sweet Notes From The Song of Songs (Part 4)

Chapter 2 verses 1 to 3. In these first three verses of this chapter two of the Song of Solomon, we have three main thoughts. In Verse 1 the Bride's Estimation of Herself; in verse 2 the Beloved's Estimation of the Bride; and in verse 3 the Bride's Estimation of the Beloved.

1. **"I am the Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valleys."** This is the young bride's estimation of herself as she now sits in the presence of her beloved in that forest clearing where she is surrounded by those "beams of cedar and rafters of fir." (See part 3) In comparison to those massive cedars, the young bride is but a flower of the field, and she owns this comparison now as she addresses her beloved, the king. So it is when the believer views himself in the light of the workings of God's wonderful grace which are like "beams of cedar" in his life. Nothing should humble us more and give us a right estimation of ourselves like the knowledge that it is "by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "A rose of Sharon – a flower of the field – and a lily of the valleys."
2. In the beloved's estimation of the bride, in verse 2, we don't find this bride's estimation of herself contradicted. The beloved doesn't tell his young bride that she is more than a mere flower of the field, he owns the estimation. But, at the same time he is full of admiration for her: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." And Christ sees us as we should often see ourselves in our sins and in our shortcomings; and yet, on the other hand, He sees us, clothed in His very own righteousness and washed in His very

own blood: "a lily among thorns." And surely there is a word of great comfort for the church of Christ in this. The Lord sees His church where she has been called to exist – "among thorns." This is where she must grow and flourish and sweeten the air with her witness, and how hard the task at times. But Christ sees the struggles of His saints, even when they abide "where Satan's seat is."

3. The bride's estimation of the beloved speaks of Christ's superiority, His sheltering care, and His sustaining grace. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons..." He is superior. "I sat down under his branches with great delight..." What sheltering care He affords. "And his fruit was sweet to my taste." So is that sustaining grace.

Is this our estimation of our Beloved? "O taste and see that the Lord is good."



MATTHEW HENRY. One of the greatest joys, surely, that Christian parents can be afforded is to learn that thy have been instruments that God has chosen to use in the conversion of their very own children. On the 7th December 1678 this joy was realised in the heart of Philip Henry, Minister of the gospel, and one of the 2,000 Puritan band of preachers that had earlier been ejected from their churches for their non-conformity in 1662. It was a Sabbath afternoon, a time when the hearts of the Lord's people should be very near to heaven, that young Matthew Henry approached his faithful father to be "examined", as he puts it, as to whether or not he had "the marks of true grace" within his heart. "I told my father my evidences," he says, "he liked them, and told me, if those evidences were true (as I think they were), I had true grace." A few years earlier, Matthew Henry, still only a boy of thirteen, had begun to draw up "A Catalogue of God's Mercies" towards him. In that Catalogue of Mercies, he looked back three years, to a time when he was only ten years old, and traced the day that he first began to feel that God was stretching out His hand in fervour towards him. "I think it was three years ago," he say, "that I began to be convinced, hearing a sermon by my father of Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite hear, O God, thou wilt not despise." That text

smouldered and burned within the young boy's heart until that day, some five or six years late, it burst into flames by the fanning of God's Holy Spirit when the rejoicing father was taken up to glorify God even in the life of his own flesh and blood.

Matthew Henry was, of course, what was said of Murray McCheyne: "Nae ordinary man". Nor was he an "ordinary" child; or did he have an "ordinary" father, or spring from an "ordinary" family. He was reared up in the ways of Godliness, so common within the homes of these islands in that memorable age, and at three years of age, we are told of him, he could read the Bible clearly and distinctly. He soon set his heart upon the work of the Ministry of God's Word, for, having been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light by the faithful preaching of his own father, he had a desire to "do good unto others also." But these were unsettled and unsettling times for any who possessed the true spirit of Biblical non-conformity, and Matthew Henry's course of studies was often interrupted and changed.

In 1687, however, the severe strictures against the non-conformists were relaxed and Matthew Henry realised his heart's desire when he was ordained to the ministry and inducted to the charge of the flock of God at Chester. Over the next twenty-five years he expounded the Word of God to his beloved congregation from week to week. It was this weekly exposition of god's truth that was to lay the foundation stone for Matthew Henry's most famed contribution to the church of Christ that would follow him: his Commentary on the Old and New Testament. "This night," he records in his diary for the 12th November 1704, "after many thoughts of heart, and many prayers concerning it, I began my Notes on the Old Testament. It is not likely that I shall live to finish it." He did, in fact, live to finish his Old Testament Commentary, but God saw fit to take him to be with Himself just as the fifth volume, ending at the Acts of the Apostles was completed. "Others took up the fallen pen," says one writer, "they completed a sixth volume, but did not continue Matthew Henry." "Sell your boots and buy Matthew Henry," was the rustic advice that Charles Haddon Spurgeon often gave to his aspiring preachers at the Pastor's College: "It will supply a vast store of sermons," he told them, "and as for thoughts, they will swarm like twittering swallows around an old gable at the close of Autumn."

Matthew Henry had only reached his fifty-second year when he received a fatal injury through a fall from his horse. He had been travelling to a preaching engagement, and although he went on to fulfil the engagement, died early the next morning. The spirit that had been broken through seeing the sinfulness of sin, and the heart that had been contrite on that day when God's Word come to it while still in tender years, would soon rejoice in God's eternal home. "A broken and a contrite heart," will never be "despised" by the Lord. Matthew Henry's

was never despised in the years of life that God gave to him on this earth to do His will; nor would it be despised when it winged its way into the realms of everlasting day.

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

By Mrs Seaton

Dear boys and girls,

Here is a short Bible story for you this month: - One man who believed in Jesus was a ruler among the Jews. He was Nicodemus, a rich Pharisee. Most of the Pharisees were very proud. They did not believe that John the Baptist or Jesus were teachers sent from God.

Nicodemus was not like the other Pharisees. He heard Jesus teach the people who had come to worship at the Passover. "Surely Jesus is very great," Nicodemus thought. While other Pharisees were finding fault with Jesus, Nicodemus wanted to hear more of his teachings. One night he went to the place where Jesus stayed to talk with him.

Nicodemus said, "Master, we know you are a teacher from God. No man could do the miracles you do unless God was with him."

Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know about the kingdom of God. He said, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was puzzled. He asked, "How can a man be born after he is grown up? Can he become a tiny baby again?"

Jesus did not mean that a man would be born again in body but in heart. He said, "Unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Do not be surprised when I say that you must be born again. The wind blows. You hear it and you see what it does. Yet you do not see the wind itself. You cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. That is the way it is with those who are born again."

Nicodemus thought about Jesus' words. No one could see the Spirit. Yet a person whose heart was changed, born again, would act as if he had the Spirit of God in his heart.

This is how we become real Christians, boys and girls, it is when God's Holy Spirit lives in our lives and when we love God and believe in Him with all our heart. Our Lord Jesus finished that talk with Nicodemus by telling him that – "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

With Love
Mrs Seaton

Edition 60 of The Wicket Gate Magazine - A Continuing Witness
Issued on the Internet May 2006
Web Address of the Magazine - www.wicketgate.co.uk
Issued with the permission of the Elders & Deacons of the Reformed Baptist Church, Inverness Scotland