

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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- 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

# The Believer's Attitude *Towards* Word of God — Words of Men

Dear Friends,

When the apostle Paul invited a “curse” upon his head if ever he preached another gospel, he was, surely, setting an eternal pattern for the believer’s attitude towards the Word of God and the words of men. “But if we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed.” The apostle was, of course, fully persuaded that what he preached was the Word of God; but what he is doing is pressing home to his readers the absolute necessity of **their** being fully persuaded, as well. If they fail to be, then they may well be carried away from the truth of God to the mere opinions of men simply on account of the accepted “standing” of those men. “In other words,” the apostle is saying, “when you hear us preaching, you are not to ask yourself, ‘**Who** is this that is preaching?’ but ‘**What** is it that is being preached?’ And if we are found preaching anything other than the pure Word of God as God has so graciously revealed it to us, then lay your anathemas at our feet and let us be accursed.”

Now the importance of that principle for our day cannot be emphasised enough. How many denominations, or associations, or churches are being led in completely unscriptural paths simply because the denominational leaders or its ministers say that the path is alright and safe to travel? The deciding factor in much that has been entered into by various church bodies has not been the Word of God, but the words of men. And the reason that these words of men have been so readily accepted and acted upon has been on account of the personality, or the position, or the reputation of those who uttered them. Implicit trust has so often been placed in the advice of men without one reference to the clear commands and teachings of the Word of God, and even this trust has been based upon what those men might have said or believed twenty or thirty years ago, but have long-since abandoned. “See how the mighty are fallen,” is a sad word that must be written as the spiritual epitaph of some who have done valiantly at an earlier period in their Christian warfare, but who have now virtually surrendered their swords to the onslaughts of popular opinion or ecclesiastical acclaim.

Brethren! Not, **Who** is it that is speaking, but **What** is it that is being said.

W. J. Seaton  
(The Pastor's Letter March 1971)

## **James Laing ::: A Boy Of Full Stature.**

Amongst the treasures bequeathed to us through the writings of the Godly Robert Murray McCheyne is the account of the conversion and the subsequent early death of a young boy by the name of James Laing. McCheyne entitles his account – “Another Lily Gathered,” and the depth of conviction and spiritual insight unfolded in the earthly pilgrimage of this young boy of “Full Stature” should make each and every one of us examine himself, and, especially our dealings with the young.

There was no “holding back” of the sternest of truths in the preaching men like McCheyne, even when preaching to those of tender years. “You are not too young to be converted and brought to Christ. If you die without Christ, you will surely perish. The most of you are wicked, idle, profane, prayerless, ungodly children ... if you die thus, you will have your part in the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone.” How readily would McCheyne – although lauded today – be accepted today, with such preaching? And yet, it was such preaching that made the roots of this tender plant, Jamie Laing, sink deeply into those two great pre-requisites to any assurance of salvation: “Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**“There’s me  
come awa!  
without Christ  
tonight again”**

James Laing was born on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1828 and while still only a boy of eight years old was bereft of his mother through the fever that was to later lay hold on him, as well, and usher him into Christ’s presence. “The first time that James showed any concern for his soul,” McCheyne tells us, “was in the autumn of 1839.” those were the days of Revival at St. Peter’s where McCheyne was Pastor, and “even strangers were forced to say, ‘Surely God is in this

place.” Jamie’s elder brother and his sister had both been awakened during these days of refreshing, and how heart-warming a scene is painted for us on one occasion when the young “mother” of the house – Jamie’s older sister – returns home from the meeting to find her two brothers upon their knees “earnestly crying for mercy.” “Jamie feels he needs Christ too,” the older boy confides in his sister; but, Jamie’s “need”, like many before and since, proved to be like the “morning dew that passeth away.”

But, the Holy Spirit was abroad in power in those days, and young and all as Jamie Laing was, the workings of the Reprover were becoming more and more evident in his life. Picture the young boy as he leaves yet another service unconverted – “... come awa’ with out Christ tonight again.” “He kept close by the wall of the Kirk,” we are told, “that he might escape observation.” See him as the tears flowed down his cheeks at the reading of God’s Word in the Sabbath school, and we may well encounter something of the soul in anguish – be that soul ever so young.

“The day of Immanuel’s power, and the time of his love, was, however, near at hand,”

**“Oh, Jesus,  
save me – save me!”**

McCheyne informs us. The fever had now taken hold on the young life, and there lay before the young boy many months of violent suffering. Yet, out of all the tribulation, God was going to bring glory to His Name and salvation to the soul of the boy in need. How steep and hard the climb to the summit of the mountain before the plain sweeps out before us; so it is with the convicted sinner in agony of soul. “Have I only to believe that Jesus died for sinners? Is that all?” How simple the way of salvation seemed to him now. But, it was because he had had to climb to the summit of the hill of wrath that he could now, so clearly, see, the plain of mercy.

That his salvation had been “all of grace”, the young lad never doubted. It was Jesus that he had cried for in his time of need, and Jesus only, who had met that need. Murray McCheyne tells us of the day that he spoke to him from the verse: “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake.” The verse worked in his young heart until it raised his invalid frame in glory to his Saviour: “Ah, tha’s it,” he called out to his sister, “...it’s no! for my righteousness’ sake, but for **His** righteousness.” “Surely God was his teacher,” comments McCheyne, “for God alone can reveal the sweetness and glory of this truth to the soul of man!”

How often, in the history of Christ's Church, has the death-bed become the pulpit. Even so, was the death-bed of young James Laing. He ministered

**“You'll no' get  
Christ unless you  
are in earnest.”**

to all and sundry from his dying pillow – for all came to his bedside to dwell on the words that fell like honey from his lips. But, it was especially on those boys of his own age and interests that his words fell with most power. “I have sinned with you,” he used to tell them as they gathered around his bed when the Sabbath school was ended, “now I would like you to come to Christ with me.” “Here are two awful verses – (he went on)

‘There is a dreadful hell,  
And everlasting pains;  
There sinners must with devils dwell  
In darkness, fire, and chains.’”

“Then pointing to the fire,” McCheyne tells us, “he said, ‘You could not keep your finger long there; but, remember, hell is a **lake** of fire.’” “Go and tell Jesus that you are poor, lost, hell-deserving sinners, and tell Him to give you a new heart. Mind, He's willing, but Oh, be earnest! You'll no get it unless ye be in earnest.”

Jamie's concern over the friends that he may have misled in his young life weighed heavily upon him as he lay on his bed. He confessed to his sister that one day during the Revival he had torn-up one of God's “promises” that had been handed to him and laughed at the boy who gave it. “Oh Margaret,” he cried, “if I hadna laughed at him, maybe he would have sought Christ until he had **found** Him.” Perhaps it was this tender conscience that motivated his desire to see his fellows saved along with him. “Seek Jesus young,” he pled with one boy, “for it's easier to find Christ when we're young.” He also, knew the value of a minister who solemnly warned, both young and old, of their soul's condition: “... go you to our Kirk,” he exhorted this boy, David, “go you to our Kirk, and he will tell you the way to come to Christ.” And how touchingly practical the young saint is as he puts his earthly house in order before he leaves for that city “eternal in the heavens,” for, to this same David he bids his sister, “Give him my Sunday trousers and my new boots, that he might go to the Church.”

Two things shine pre-eminently clear in the realisation of young James Laing: the knowledge

**“Ah, father, don't  
call me poor.”**

of his poverty by nature and his riches by grace. The ill, spent body of his young son was grief to Jamie's father and once he called him, "Poor Jamie." With the boys words we must conclude: "Ah, father, don't call me poor ... five minutes of heaven will make up for all this." He was ready to "meet death in Christ." "Oh, Margaret, I see it must be all Jesus from beginning to end ... they that have Christ have all things."

So be it.

## Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 31 concluded)

In our last edition we left David, in verse 10, telling of the grief that had beset his life; in this edition our verses take us to how he was treated in this trial of life.

**Verse 11.** "I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours ..." Reproach is little thought of by those who are not called to endure it, but he who passes under its lash knows how deep its wounds. The best of men may have the bitterest of foes, and be subject to the most cruel taunts. "*But especially among my neighbours,*" says David. We feel most the slights of those who should have shown us sympathy. Perhaps David's friends feared to be identified with his declining fortunes, and therefore turned against him in order to win the mercy, if not the favour of his opponents. Self interest rules the most of men: ties the most sacred are soon snapped by its influence. Afraid to be seen in the company of a man so thoroughly despised, those who once courted his society hastened from his as though he had been infected with the plague: - "They that did see me without fled from me."

*C. H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 15.** "My times are in thy hand ..." When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, "This is the time in which God will deliver thee." (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 24:4) "No," saith David, "The time is not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time."

*Matthew Henry*

**Verse 15. “My times are in thy hands ...”** Our life on earth is under the constant strict observation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows when to turn the key and shut it up, - for He holds the keys of the unseen world and of death. If unconverted sinners would consider this, would they still dare to put off their salvation? Jesus sees how they react under every sermon they hear, and in every prayer wherein they join with others; how their hearts are moved or unmoved by every repeated call that is given to them to turn to God, and secure their peace by application of their Redeemer’s reconciling blood. If they knew the knowledge of Christ, then, what pangs of trembling would they feel within themselves lest the key should turn before their great work be done?

*John Howe*

**Verse 19. “Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ...”** As a good man will regulate his goodness towards others in such a way so as not to defraud his own children or family ... so God, in like manner, in exercising his beneficence to aliens from his family, knows well how to reserve for His own children that which belongs to them – as it were, by hereditary right – that is to say, because of their Adoption.

*John Calvin*

**Verse 19. “Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee ...”** Mark the phrase, “Laid up for them.” His mercy and goodness is intended for them, as a father that lays by such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, “This is a portion for such a child.”

*William Gurnall*

**Verse 20. “Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence ...”** As there are *mysteries* in the ways of God and providence, so there are mysteries in the things of our salvation. As God is a hidden God, so His people are a hidden people – not only for safety, but for secrecy: they are alive and yet dead; they have nothing and yet possess all things; they are not satisfied with the whole world, and yet are content with little; they abound in works of righteousness, and yet abhor all righteousness of works.

*Philip Henry*

**Verse 24. “Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart ...”**

O beloved, I may not mention the hills that lie before us in heaven’s way which we must climb, and the craggy rocks that we must get over – the walls of Jerusalem are to be repaired, and the Temple re-edified: “*Be of good courage,*” then, for without courage the work will never be accomplished. “Be of good courage, *and the Lord will strengthen your heart.*”

*Simon Ash*

**BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE**

**By  
Mrs Seaton**

Dear boys and girls,

Once upon a time there was a little boy called Johnny who had a bad memory. One day his mother asked him to run down to the grocer’s shop for a box of spice. She needed the spice for the cake she was starting to mix. “Hurry now, Johnny, and come straight back home with the spice, because I’m waiting for it,” his mother reminded him. So, off went Johnny feeling quite important.

He reached the shop in record time, bought the spice, and then, started off home, putting the box of spice in his pocket for safe keeping. As he was passing the village playing field, he noticed some of his friends playing football. “Come on, Johnny, have a game with us, we’re a man short for the team.” Would you believe it? Johnny puffed out his chest, stretched his full height, and ran over to join the game, completely forgetting that his mother was waiting for the spice.

What a god game he had; he had scored a goal, too! Johnny was still thinking about the game when he went in through the garden gate. But not for long, for there was his mother waiting at the door. Oh dear, she was angry. And what was Johnny’s excuse? That’s right: “I forgot.”

I wonder how many boys and girls have bad memories like Johnny? Most of you, I’m sure. When you do something your shouldn’t,



or fail to do something you should, you usually explain by saying, like Johnny, “I forgot.” Two little words, but they can do so much harm. Not only in ordinary everyday things, but, more especially, in important things such as the things you are taught in Sunday school and Church about God and His blessings and His promises, and especially His gift to us, the Lord Jesus Christ Who died that we might be forgiven.

In the second part of the Pilgrim’s Progress, Mr Greatheart says to Christiana (Pilgrim’s wife) and her children, “You must know that *Forgetful Green* is the most dangerous place in all these parts.”

Boys and girls, don’t be betrayed by your bad memories, but always try and remember all that God has said through the Bible – His Holy Word. Don’t wander on to “Forgetful Green.” Do what the Bible says: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”

## *Great Hymns*



## *and their Writers*

God Moves in a  
Mysterious Way.

By  
**William Cowper**

It was that grand old man of the commentary, Matthew Henry, who coined the phrase, “He who notes providences, will have providences to note.” In other words, he who looks for and recognises God’s almighty hand working in his

life, will live to see that his life is guarded and kept by the power of Omnipotence. This is a truth that should find ready acceptance with every child of God, and a few have expressed the glories of providence more skillfully and beautifully than the gentle William Cowper. The theme of his hymn, that that we note is the song of God’s elect people in all generations. Joseph is sold into Egypt, purchased as a slave and imprisoned as a criminal, but, if God is moving in “a mysterious way,” then, He is moving in a mysterious way “His wonders to perform.” God has “sent him on to preserve life,” and although young Joseph’s brothers “meant it unto him for evil, God meant it unto him for good.” The Apostle Paul, confined in a Roman prison can, still withall, write to the Philippian

believers that the things which appeared so manifestly against him have “fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” The mighty “Tinker of Bedford,” shut up in a similar strait in a Bedford jail to keep him from preaching, sits down and writes his famous Pilgrim’s Progress so that, three hundred years later he is still preaching as powerfully as ever.

And the earth would not contain the books that would be required to tell of God’s “mysterious” ways in the lives of His redeemed children from generation to generation. Old John Gilpin, on his way to London to be burnt at the hands of that evil woman “bloody” Mary, falls from his horse and breaks a leg and so, is forced to put up at an inn until he can continue his journey under the Queen’s guard. But, by the time they reach London and are passing the very spot where Gilpin would have been martyred – Smithfield Market – the Coronation bells are beginning to ring out, for Elizabeth has come to the throne and Mary has been banished for ever.



And so with Cowper himself. The story is told that, during a terrible bout of depression he vowed to end his life once and for all and set off for a lake near his home in order to drown himself in its cold waters. As he rode towards the lake, however a fog descended and he completely lost his way. He kept on riding until, to his amazement and soul’s conviction he found himself, when the fog had cleared, outside the front door of his own home once again. The words of his hymn came easily to his pen in such circumstances.

“God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.”

This is a theme-song of providence; a glorious paraphrase of those parting words of our Saviour to the disciples in that upper room: “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Once let the saints of God go forth against the devil with this truth emblazoned upon their breastplates and the old enemy of men’s souls must withdraw his arrows of perplexity. For, in the midst of it all, the believer with this truth burnt into his heart knows that God is “performing wonders” for his spiritual well-being.

But, is this not a deficiency in much of our modern-day Christian thinking and practice, that, so often, we fail to stand amazed and overawed at what our God does “perform” on our behalf? We are all, at least a little tainted with that old devil’s trinity, “Luck, Chance and Fortune.” There’s a bit of “practical atheism” with the most of us, for, we fail to trace everything to the Author and Finisher of our faith. Cowper shows nothing of this spirit as he moves into the second verse of his hymn, but he clearly shows that he has cast himself upon a God who “doeth his will among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.”

“Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.”

This is what really determines our views of God’s providential dealings with us in this life – with all that besets us: do we believe that when God works His will, He works His “Sovereign Will?” This alone, my friends, enables the trembling saint to “trace the rainbow through the rain” and remember, indeed, that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” This is Cowper’s sentiment in the next verse.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”

And what of the exhortations that Cowper delivers to us to depend on the Lord’s gracious dealings in the latter half of his hymn! Perhaps we could pause here for a moment to consider the true nature of using our “talents” to God’s own glory. William Cowper could have been numbered among the greatest of the English poets of his day, or any other day. But, unlike many Christian men of ability who turned their talents to the writing of the world’s books and so, received the world’s acclamation, the gentle recluse of Olney – together with his great friend and companion John Newton – contented himself with expressing the mighty doctrines of Grace in a form far beyond the talents of many.



“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,” he exhorts us,  
“But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.”

And surely, the majesty and simplicity of verse 5 is unsurpassed among the hymns of faith:

“His purposes shall ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.”

How “bitter” was providence “in the bud” to Joseph, and Paul, and Bunyan, and Gilpin, and a million more of the Lord’s saints from time immemorial; but “how sweet the flower,” when God had had His perfect work and the things which we thought to be against us “fell out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”

How we need to cast ourselves in these days upon the arm of Omnipotence, for, not only are we dependant upon God’s providences working together for our good, but we are dependant upon Him to even *show* us the truth of this. This is Cowper’s final blow, in his last verse, for God’s unquestionable sovereignty in the lives of His people:

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.”

Providence is the King’s plan, and He will “make it plain.” “He who notes providences will have providences to note.”

AMEN

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# The Christian In Complete Armour

## (1) The Girdle of Truth

Satan comes as a Serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to deceive us with error for truth. To defend us against this design, it is necessary that we be girt with the truth in our understanding.

I remember Tertullian, speaking of some heretics, as to their manner of preaching, says, “They teach by persuading, and do not by teaching persuade.” Truth is loved and prized only by those that know it, and not to desire to know it is to despise it.

Every Christian should labour for an established judgment in the truth on account of the damning nature of false doctrines, remembering that false doctrines hunt for the precious souls of men, as well as any other sin. A corrupt judgment in foundation-truths kills as sure as a rotten heart.

This is not believed by some, who, though very strict in their lives, and apparently as tender in matters of morality as Lot was of his guests, yet are very loose in their principles and judgments, exposing them, as Lot later exposed his daughters, to be defiled with any corrupt doctrine that come to their door. They would make us think that in the matter of truth men played but at small game, and that their souls were not at stake, as in other sins. As if there were not such a question to be asked at the last day – what opinions we held? And whether we were sound in the faith? – in a word, as if false doctrine were an innocent thing. Yea, there be some that make as many roads to heaven as the Scriptures tell us there are ways to hell. Truths in many professing Christians’ minds are not as stars fixed in the heavens, but are like meteors that dance in the air. They are not as characters engraven in marble, but writ in the dust, which every wind and

idle breath of seducers deface. Therefore, humbly beg and established judgment of truth from God. But, lay this deep in thine heart, that God, who gives an eye to see truth, must also give a hand to hold it fast when we have it.

Keep therefore thy acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance long with thee. “And having done all to stand, stand therefore, having thy loins girt with truth ...”

**William Gurnall – The Christian in Complete Armour.**