

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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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
- Practical Studies in the two Books of Samuel

Obedience to the Will of God

Through The Word of God

Dear Friends,

There was surely something **inevitable** about those words that Martin Luther spoke as he stood arraigned before the power and authority of Papal Rome: “Unless I am convinced of error by the authority of Scripture,” he said, “I cannot, and **will not** retract. Here I stand, I can do no other ...”. Inevitable, we say, because Martin Luther, at that crucial point in his Christian life, was making more than an isolated statement relevant only to his own situation. He was expressing a Divine principle that must govern each believing soul in Christ if the “peace of God” is ever to be known and felt in the Christian walk.

The principle involved is the inevitability of obedience to the Will of God when that Will has been clearly revealed to us through the truth that the Lord has committed to us in His Word. We make this the standard for salvation – that the sinner must “believe” and “do” what the Word of God demands of him – why should we suddenly jettison this demand once we have been “brought to Christ?” Luther had explored the Word of the Lord and had discovered that the sinner is justified before the Lord through Faith, and as long as the doctrines and dogmas of Rome denied that precious truth, then, he had no alternative but to oppose himself to them regardless of the cost that might have to be met. He could “do no other.”

We get something of the same thing in the life of that man whom the Bible calls “Caleb, the son of Jephunneh;” that one who “wholly followed the Lord.” Together with Joshua, he had returned to the camp of the Israelites and, in opposition to the other ten spies who had gone with him to spy-out the land of Canaan, he told the people that they could “possess” the land. He might appear to stand almost alone in the face of popular opinion, but the Lord had revealed His Will to Caleb concerning the conquest of Canaan, and says he, “I brought them word again, **as it was in mine heart.**” You see the **inevitable** nature of those words again? The Lord had spoke to Caleb, and now, Caleb can “do no other” but repeat

what the Lord had placed within his heart – “I brought them word again, as it was in mine heart.”

As Amos would have put it, “The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” Or Paul, when he stood before the Jews his own countrymen, in the city of Rome and reminded them that it was for “the hope of Israel” that he was “bound with this chain.” Blessed inevitability! As “servants of Jesus Christ” might we not long to see something more of that spirit pervading our churches and governing our individual lives?

The greatest thing that a believer can be, under Christ, is a **servant to His Word**. Modernism would call this “Bibliolatry” – worship of the Bible. But we say that apart from the Bible it is absolutely impossible to know Christ savingly, or to do the Will of His father obediently. Those who would want to eliminate our servitude to the Word of God merely want to overthrow the demands of its truth for their lives. But to the obedient child of God, by the enabling of God’s performing grace in his life, there is a delight in “doing the truth” – aye, it is inevitable that it be done. For if he is to live with a conscience “void of offence” and enjoy the “peace of God” in his soul, then like Luther, or Caleb or Amos, or Paul, he can “do no other”.

This alone explains a Luther’s stand before the might of Papal Rome. This alone sees that a Caleb will deliver the burden of his heart even in the face of all opposition. This alone gives the ring of assurance to the prophet’s message and shows that it is merely the “echo” of what the Lord Himself has uttered. This alone grants the perfect freedom of life and conscience to those who are “bound” for the hope of the gospel.”

How often do we hear a prayer that goes something like this: - “Where is the Lord God of Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Whitefield? Where is the God of Caleb, and Amos, and Paul?” I wonder, is there not, perhaps, just a slight hint of complacency in that prayer? Would it not, perhaps, be more in keeping with our obedience unto the Lord if we prayed, instead of “Where is the Lord God of Luther, and Calvin, and Whitefield ...?” “Where are the Luthers and Calvins and Whitefields of the **Lord God**?” Surely, the Lord is ever the same! “Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood.” But has not our approach to the truth of God undergone

radical changes in this age of the Church's life? "Doing the truth" no longer appears to be a blest inevitability on the part of the professing Church of Christ. "Here **I need not stand**, I can do all other," would seem to epitomise the Church's philosophy today much more clearly than the words of that big German Monk so long ago.

Would to God we could all place our feet more firmly on that blessed Book of God, and not be ashamed to take up the Reformer's cry: "Here I stand, I can do no other."

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

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 33)

Verse 1. "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous ..." To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal but to rejoice in God is heavenly. He who would have a double heaven must begin to rejoice below like those above.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 3. "Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." "Sing unto him..." All songs of praise should be "unto him." Singing for singing's sake is worth nothing; we must carry our tribute to the King and not cast it to the winds. "Sing unto him a new song..." Let us not present old worn-out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart into every song since we have new mercies every day. "Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully..." The sweetest tunes with the sweetest voices with the sweetest words, are all too little for the Lord our God. Let us not offer him limping rhymes, set to harsh tunes, and growled out by discordant voices. "Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise." Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings; shall we offer no loud hosannas to the Son of David?

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 6. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made...” Let any one make a world and he shall be a God, saith Augustine; hence is it that the Church maketh it the very first article of her Creed – “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth ...”

John Weemse

Verse 7. “He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap...”

The Lord deals with fluids as if they were solids, the obvious allusion being to the crossing of the Red Sea. The main point is the description of God’s handling of those vast liquid masses, as men handle solid substances, heaping the waves up and storing them away, as men might do with stones or wheat.

J. A. Alexander

Verse 8. “Let all the earth fear the Lord...” Let them not be afraid of any but Him. Doth a wild beast rage? Fear God. Doth a serpent lie in wait? Fear God. Do men hate thee? Fear God. Doth the devil fight against thee? Fear God. For the whole creation is under Him whom thou art commanded to fear.

Augustine

Verse 9. “For he spake and it was done...” Sermon – “The Irresistible Word of Jehovah.”

- 1) In Creation “He spake and it was done...”
- 2) In Calling His people “He spake and it was done...”
- 3) In Comforting them “He spake and it was done...”
- 4) In Delivering them “He spake and it was done...”
- 5) In Taking them to glory “He spake and it was done...”

Hints to the Village Preacher

Verse 17. “An horse is a vain thing for safety...” If the strength of horses comes from God, or is His gift, then trust not in the strength of horses. Use the strength of horses but do **not trust** the strength of horses. If you trust that strength that God hath given to anything you make that thing your god in place of God.

Joseph Caryl

Verse 18. “Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him...”

Look upon the sun, how it casts light and heat upon the whole world; but let its beam be but concentrated in a burning glass, then it sets fire upon the object only. And thus God in the creation looks upon all His works with a general love. Oh! But when He is pleased to cast the beams of His love, and cause them to shine upon His elect through Christ, then their hearts burn within them, their affections are inflamed while others are but a little warmed.

Richard Holdsworth

Verse 20 “Our soul waiteth for the Lord...” Not our souls but our soul, as if they all had only one. And what is the language of God by the prophet? “I will give them one heart and one way.” Thus the two disciples going to Emmaus, “Did not our **heart** burn within us?” And thus in the beginning of the gospel, “The multitude of them that believed were of one **heart** and **soul**.” We have seen several drops of water on a table, being brought to touch, running into one. If Christians were better acquainted with each other, they would easily unite.

William Jay

Great Hymns



and their Writers

**Rock of Ages,
By
Augustus Toplady**

Many stars shine brightly in the sky of Augustus Toplady’s hymn writing. “As debtors to mercy alone, of Covenant mercy I sing,” is a hymn that has a lustre almost beyond compare to cheer the darkest hour of the humblest saint – and especially the concluding verse that speaks of our security on earth as being every bit as secure as our security in heaven:

“And I to the end shall endure,

As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy **but not more secure**,
When glorified with Him in heaven.”

“A Sovereign Protector I have” is a true and steadfast guiding light to the pilgrim’s path, while, “From whence this fear and unbelief” sits glowing in the heavens pointing us to the sure and certain hope of the believer chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world and purchased unto everlasting life by the blood of the Redeemer:

“If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.”

And yet, it goes without saying, almost, that Toplady’s “Rock of Ages” far outshines the rest in a sky full of gems.

The source of Toplady’s great hymn is open to some speculation. The story goes that one day, when overtaken by a thunderstorm on Burrington Coombe, Toplady hid for shelter in the great rock which still stands in that place and was reminded of the place of refuge that he, as a believer, had in the riven side of Christ. Others believe that he gleaned the idea from reading a sermon of Daniel Brevint’s where the words are cried out in prayer – “O Rock of Israel, Rock of salvation, Rock struck and cleft for...” etc. Perhaps, it was a combination of both. But, whatever the earthly source, we may be soundly persuaded that Toplady drew his images and figures from the very Word of God itself for “The Lord Jehovah...The Rock of Ages” is the very language of Scripture and the theme of our salvation.

The hymn points us to the two great needs of the sinner as he comes to view himself in the light of God’s justice – shelter from God’s wrath and cleansing from his own sin. There is only one spot that he may find these necessities of redemption and that is in the eternal Rock of Ages:

“Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

Blessed thought that, “the **double** cure.” Let us never forget that the gospel of Christ is not only a refuge, but a hospital, as well. Not only a sanctuary where the guilty hell-deserving sinner may flee to escape the “wrath of a sin-hating God” – as Toplady puts it in another hymn – but a place of cleansing; so that we are not only saved from the penalty of sin, but are being cleansed from the power of sin. Not only justified, but also sanctified. Not only forgiven by the great Judge of all the earth, but attended to by the Great Physician of our souls. In the cleft of the Rock, which is Christ the Lord, there is, indeed, a “double cure” for all ills.

And “Neither is there salvation in any other,” our author seems to be reminding us in his second verse:

“Not the labours of my hands,
Can fulfil Thy laws demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow;
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone.”

All our works, all our zeal, all our tears on one side of the scales of eternal justice; by God’s Holy Law on the other – and we stand condemned. And if the sinner is ever going to be saved, then “Thou must save, and Thou alone.”

Now, when Toplady wrote those words, he meant them. He didn’t belong to that school who say that they believe that God must save the sinner and then tell the sinner that it all depends on him.

Toplady was an unapologetic Calvinist for he knew that the day of his salvation – when he had wandered into a country barn in Ireland and had

been struck down in his conscience by an illiterate evangelist – was the Lord’s doings and wondrous in his eyes. He was absolutely destitute of any saving merit, just as he is yet, apart from Christ:

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for Grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me Saviour, or I die.”

Toplady has often been accused by literary men of using too many mixed metaphors – the refuge, the washing, the clinging, the fleeing. But there is another language - the language of Canaan – that far transcends any such analysis and it is that language that is to the forefront here. The awakened sinner sinking in the sea of condemnation sees that there is nothing else to lay hold of but the cross of Christ rising out of the waters on a solid rock. There is no other covering for his nakedness but the robe of Christ’s righteousness. There is nothing short of God’s unmerited grace to meet his helplessness, and there is no other fountain to wash away his foulness than that which was open on that day for sin and for uncleanness.

And at the hour of death, there is still but one place of safety for the believing soul:

“While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne;
Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

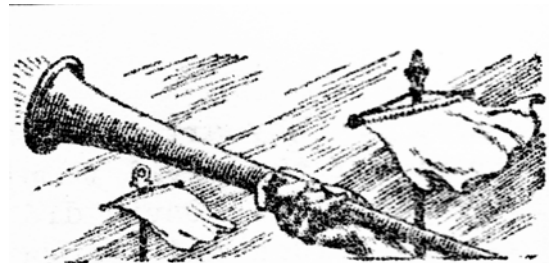
Augustus Toplady died at the young age of thirty-eight; but he died as he lived, with praise in his mouth. “I enjoy heaven already in my soul,” he whispered.

May we learn in our day that our safety is in the Rock that was cleft for us and not in anyway in our own merits. “A believer never yet carved for

himself,” Toplady told his own mother, “but he cut his own finger.” Learn, I say, that it is “all of grace” and then, we shall praise Him now and in eternity. “O my dove, that art in the cleft of the rock ... let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”

“Aye,” said an old lady to a famous preacher once, “if God hadn’t loved me before I came into the world, He would have found nothing in me to love since I have been here.”

Things that Accompany Salvation (by C. H. Spurgeon)



We read stories of eastern monarchs in the olden times, when they marched with thousands of flying banners, and with all kinds of riches borne with them. Now you are to take that as the basis of my allegory, and suppose salvation to be the sacred treasure which is being carried through the world, with guards before and guards behind, to accompany it on its journey.

1st then, **In the marches of troops and armies there are some that are outriders and go far ahead of the other troops.** So in the march of salvation. I will tell you the names of these stupendous Titans who have gone before. The first is Election; the second is Predestination; the third is Redemption.

Before Salvation came into this world, Election marched in the very forefront, and it had for its work the billeting of Salvation. Election went through the world and marked the houses to which salvation should come and the hearts in which the treasure should be deposited. Election looked through all the race of man, from Adam down to the last, and marked with

sacred stamp those for whom salvation was designed. “He must needs go through Samaria,” said Election; and salvation must go there.

Then came Predestination. Predestination did not merely mark the house, but it mapped the road in which salvation should travel to that house. Predestination ordained every step of the great army of salvation. It ordained the time when the sinner should be brought to Christ, the manner how he should be saved, the means that should be employed. It marked the exact hour and moment when God the Spirit should quicken the dead in sin, and when peace and pardon should be spoken through the blood of Christ. Predestination marked the road so completely that salvation doth never overstep the bounds, and it is never at a loss for the road. It was not meet that salvation should be left to chance, and therefore, God has mapped the place where it should pitch its tent, the manner of its footsteps to that tent, and the time when it should arrive there.

Then came Redemption. The way was rough; and though Election had marked the house, and Predestination had mapped the road, the way was so impeded that salvation could not travel it until it had been cleared. Forth came Redemption. It had but one weapon, and that was the all-victorious Cross of Christ. There stood the mountains of our sins; Redemption smote them, and they split in halves and left a valley for the Lord’s redeemed to march through. There was the gulph of God’s offended wrath; Redemption bridged it with the Cross, and so left an everlasting passage by which the armies of the Lord may pass. Redemption has tunnelled every mountain, it has dried up every sea, cut down every forest. It has levelled every high hill, and filled up the valleys, so that the road of salvation is now plain and simple. God can be Just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly.

2nd But mark, we are about to review **the army that immediately precedes salvation**. And first, in the forefront of these, there marches One whose name we must pronounce with sacred awe. It is God, the Holy Spirit. Before anything can be done in our salvation, there must come that Third Person of the sacred Trinity. Without Him, faith, repentance, humility, love, are things quite impossible. Even the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot save until it be applied to the heart by God the Holy Spirit. Before we notice the grand army, then, that immediately precedes

salvation, let us be cautious that we do not forget Him who is the leader of them all. It is He that quickens the soul, or else it would lie dead forever; it is He that makes it tender, or else it would never feel; it is He that imparts efficacy to the Word preached, or else it could never reach further than the ear; it is He that breaks the heart, it is He who makes it whole; He, from first to last, is the great worker of salvation in us, just as Jesus Christ was the author of salvation for us. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

And now, close in the rear of the adorable Spirit follow the Thundering Legion. This Thundering Legion are clad in mail; their helmets wave with horror; their speech is rough like men that come from a far country. Some of the men in this Thundering Legion bear with them swords; with these swords they are to slay the sinner. For, before the sinner can be made whole, he must be spiritually killed. The first work of the Spirit in the soul is a terrible work and this Thundering Legion is a terrible thing. God be praised, when once this Legion goes out of the heart there is some joy; but whilst they are billeted in the conscience of man, I defy him to eat or drink with any mirth or joy. The poor town of Mansoul is hung with black all the time these rough soldiers are there.

But, we have not yet come to a full conviction of salvation. Now come those that are the actual attendants upon salvation – or rather, that march in the rank immediately before it. And just before the full assurance of salvation there marches:

Humility. She is of a downcast look; she is not sad, but she hath no high looks; she scarcely dares to lift her eyes to the place where God's honour dwelleth. Side by side with her, is her sister called; **Repentance**, watering the ground with tears to lay the dust before the King. Then side by side with Repentance is one called **Prayer**, and with Prayer the fourth one of that company immediately attending salvation, a **Tender Conscience**. Poor Tender conscience; some despise him but he is dear to the King's heart. I would to God, my brethren, you and I knew more about him. I used to know a conscience so tender, that I would wish to feel it again.

3rd And now comes **Salvation in all its fulness**. The “things that accompany salvation” make a glorious march – from Election down to

those precious opening buds of virtue in the sinner's heart. But then, comes the precious casket set with gems and jewels. And who are those that are close around it? There are three sweet sisters that always have the custody of the treasure – you know them; their names are common in Scripture – Faith, Hope, and Love – the three divine sisters.

Faith, who layeth hold of Christ, and trusteth all in Him; that ventureth everything upon the blood and sacrifice of Jesus, and hath no other trust beside.

Hope, that with beaming eye looks up to Jesus Christ in glory, and expects Him soon to come; looks downward, and when she sees grim death in her way, expects that she shall pass through with victory.

And thou, sweet **Love**, the sweetest of the three. Love looks to Christ and is enamoured of Him; loves Him in all His Offices, adores His presence, reverences His words, and is prepared to bind her body to the stake and die for Him, who bound His body to the Cross to die for her.

Have you these three graces? If so, you have salvation. Cast your eye forward; remember Election is yours, Predestination and Sovereign Decree are both yours. Remember, the terrors of the law are past; the broken heart is mourning; the comforts of religion you have already received; the spiritual graces are already in the bud. You are an heir of immortality, and for you there is a glorious future. These are the “things that accompany salvation.”



The Christian In Complete Armour

(3) The Christian's Spiritual Shoes

“Shod with the Preparation of the gospel of peace.” And what this preparation is will best appear by considering the part it is designed for –

the foot; and the piece of armour it is compared to, and that is the soldier's shoe, which is to be one of the strongest make, being not so much intended for finery as defence.

So necessary is this piece of armour indeed, that for want of it alone, the soldier in some cases is disabled for service, as when he is called to march far on hard ways, and those, may be, strewed with sharp stones. How long will he go, if not shod, without being wounded or foundering?

The man whose feet are well shod fears no ways, but goes through thick and thin, foul or fair, stones or straws; all are alike to him that is well shod. Thus when the will and heart of a man is prompt, and ready to do any work, the man is, as it were, shod and armed against all trouble and difficulty which he is to overcome in the doing of it. David was never so merry as in the cave. "My heart is prepared, my heart is prepared," said he, "I will sing and give praise." If David's heart had not been shod with this preparation, he would not have liked the way he was in so well. You would have heard him sing to another tune, and heard him quarrel with his destiny, or fall out with his profession, that had put him to so much trouble and driven him from the pleasures of a prince's court, to hide himself underground from those that hunted for his life.

But why is it called "the preparation **of the gospel of peace?**" I answer, because the gospel brings the joyful tidings of peace concluded betwixt God and man by the blood of Jesus. And this is so welcome to the trembling conscience of poor sinners, that no sooner is the report of a peace concluded between God and them sounded in their ears by the preaching of the gospel then, instantly there appears a new life in them; to the effect that they, who were before so fearful and shy of every petty trouble – knowing it could bring no good news to them (from God) – are now "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," and able to go out smilingly to meet the greatest sufferings that are, or can be, in the way before them, and say undauntedly to them, as Christ did to those that came out against him with swords and staves to attack Him, - "Whom seek ye?"

William Gurnall

BOYS AND GIRLS PAGE

Letter from
Mrs Seaton

Dear Boys and Girls,

A man once asked the great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, if any one had been “saved” at a meeting that he had been preaching at. “Yes, there was,” replied Mister Spurgeon, “there were two-and-a-half people saved”.

The man was puzzled at this riddle for a moment, but then he said, “Oh, yet, I see; you men there were **two** adults, and **one** child saved!” “Oh, no,” said Mr Spurgeon. “I mean there were **two children** and **one adult** saved!”

You see, boys and girls, the **adult** – the grown-up person, who was saved, had only half of his life to live for Jesus – he had already lived half of his life. But the children who were saved had their whole lives before them and could live their whole lives for Jesus. So, Mr Spurgeon was right, was he not, when he said that the “two-and-a-half people” who were saved at his meeting were not two adults and one child, but two children and one adult.

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