

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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**A Pastoral Letter From John Kennedy of Dingwall**  
**Letter sent from Rome during April 1881**



My Dear Friends,

Though I have gone away for a season I feel that I am not separated from you, for I find you in my heart wherever I go. Recent circumstances constrained me to think of our final separation on the earth, but in forecasting this I found that you and I were so associated that, if I could not remove you from the court of my conscience, no more would I remove you from the love of my heart. If there must be an early parting, we must all yet stand together before the Great White Throne of Judgment. All who part here must gather together there. And even that gathering is in order to another separation. The mixed multitude shall be divided by the Great Shepherd: the righteous, placed at His right hand – not one of them wanting – shall go to life eternal, and the wicked, placed on His left – not one of them wanting – shall go to everlasting punishment. In view of this, blessed are all those who are united in the Person, washed by the blood, and sealed by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, and whose hope is sanctioned by the Word of the living God!

If, through the mercy of God, I shall return to my work among you again, I will have nothing to preach to you except what I preached to you before. Hitherto I have taught you what I believed to be the counsel of God, giving prominence to those truths which, in seeking a resting-place for my own soul, I found to be of primary importance – the utter ruin effected by the fall; the sovereignty and riches of New Covenant grace; the eternal Godhead and true humanity of Jesus Christ; His atoning sacrifice, with its infinite value and infallible efficacy; the certainty of the application of redemption to all for whom, as a substitute, Jesus died; the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost, in order to an entrance into the kingdom of grace on earth, and of perfected sanctification, in order to passing through death

into the kingdom of glory in heaven – of leaving “the first principles of the oracles of God,” in advancing acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, in order to evidence our being taught of God – and of bearing fruit in sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, that we may certify to our conscience, and prove to the Church, that we have passed from death into life. These, if I resume my work, will continue to be my main themes, as they have been in the past, while declaring to all, without any exception, that they are called by God to receive, and rest upon, the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation, as He is presented to us in “the word of the truth of the Gospel.”

In these days of unrest, when men are blindly groping after novelties, it would be well to have our hearts fed by this manna, which never waxeth old. Steadfast and immovable in the faith we can never be unless the everlasting verities of the Gospel give both strength and gladness to our hearts.

There are some of you who, hitherto, have cared for none of these things. You take help from the Prince of Darkness, though ye wot not of his presence and his power, in keeping your souls benighted, that so you may find it easy to walk in the way of your heart. And willingly subject to this fell power, you rebelliously resist the will and madly reject the counsel of God, and resent the strivings of His Spirit. But all the sparks of truth, which you have laboured to extinguish in your souls, in order to create the darkness which your hearts were craving, shall yet be gathered into one great fire on the bosom of your conscience, in order to burn up all your joy and ease and hope. The Lord grant that this may be done in mercy by a Spirit-given conviction of sin! If not, then it shall take place in righteous retribution, and the fire thus kindled shall penetrate your souls with a scorching that shall never end. The Lord requireth that which is past, and the words of God, which when they were addressed to you, you treated with indifference, shall yet command your attention, and shall utterly and awfully overpower you.

There are among you not a few who cannot but know that your souls are yet lying where the fall has left them. You dare not hope

that it shall be well with you at the latter end, if you experience not a change to which you as yet are strangers. How, in such a plight, and in view of the end of all things, and while not having a moment beyond the present which you may call your own, can you be at ease? It can only be by accepting a promise from him who was “a liar from the beginning,” and who lies that he may murder. He tells you that tomorrow is the day of salvation, while He who cannot lie tells you that it is “To-day.” But you receive the liar’s word, and reject the word of God, and, resting on a falsehood, you float down on “the course of this world” to eternal woe. And you pervert the counsel of God in order to deepen your delusive sleep. You know that salvation is of God, and you say that if it comes at all it will find you somehow and somewhere ere you die.

But can you endure not to know that the salvation of God is yours? At least you know that if it be not yours the eternal woe of hell is right before you. God does not reveal His secret things to you, but He calls you to bethink you of what lies before you, and now, without delay, to flee to Jesus from the wrath to come. And the very knowledge you have of your present state but makes it all the easier for you to abide in it. You look down on those who are less enlightened, and your sense of superiority but emboldens you to advance in the way that leads down to death. You have been only hardened by that which ought to alarm you. You have acquired an unholy familiarity with the terrors of the Lord, till you have become bold to despise them. The light that is in you surely is darkness if it be such as this, and will, “except ye repent,” go out at last in the darkness into which the Sun of Righteousness shall never shed a ray. Oh, “while it is called ‘to-day,’” shake off your slumber, break through the spell of delusion, and put all away from before your soul’s attention which engrossed you before, till the great question, “What must I do to be saved?” is addressed by you to the Lord and answered by the Lord to you.

There are some among you with whom, now and for ever, I desire to be associated, thinking of you, as I do, as having the fear of God in your heart, and as poor sinners cleaving, in your helplessness,

to free rich saving grace through Christ crucified. To such I would say, do not expect to be less dependent on the grace of God than you have been in the past, and be afraid of the consciousness of that dependence passing away from your heart. Your only strength is in the grace that is in Christ, and you reach it only as by faith you lean with your weakness and unworthiness on Him in whom all fulness dwelleth. Forget not that you can only thrive in the measure in which you watch and pray, and your heart, constrained by the love of Christ, keeps your hand to the work which the Lord has given you to do. Seek grace to move you to take a deeper interest in those around you who yet know not God. Restrain not prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in His convincing and converting power. And, brethren, pray for me, that the Lord may make profitable to my soul His present dealing with me, and thus prepare me for future work on earth, or make me ready for the kingdom in which no one shall ever say, "I am sick."

I am now on my way to my home and my work, at the disposal of Him who doeth all things well.

I am, my dear friends, your loving Pastor,  
John Kennedy



## **Gleanings In the Psalms**

**(Psalm 47)**

**Verse 1. "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph."** This little psalm speaks strongly of our Lord's Sovereignty in subduing all things under His feet and bestowing on His people those graces and gifts that they stand most in need of. "Our life and our breath are in His hands," is the sentiment of the psalmist, and may we all learn it to the good and the advantage

of our spiritual well-being. When we learn to believe that the “hands” of the Lord are great enough, and large enough, and safe enough to hold all the issues of our life, then we will confidently commit all the issues of our life into His hands. The outcome will then be plain; we will be free to “clap” our hands in praise of our God, as the psalmist exhorts us: “O clap your hands, all ye people ...”

**Verse 2. “For the Lord most high is terrible; *He is a great King over all the earth.*”** Let us never make the mistake of believing that the Lord only becomes a great King when the believer crowns Him King in his life; or that He is only the King of those who believe. He is their King in a special sense, but whether or not one son of Adam’s race had ever believed and crowned Him King would have made not one iota of difference to His eternal and everlasting sovereignty. “The Lord most high ... is a great King over all the earth.”

**Verse 4. “He shall choose our inheritance for us ...”** It may be thou art godly and poor. ‘Tis well; but canst thou tell whether *if thou wert not poor*, thou wouldst be godly? Surely God knows us better than we know ourselves, and therefore can best fit the estate to the person.

*Giles Fletcher*

**Verse 4. “He shall choose our inheritance for us ...”** A man of some wealth and position once took a friend of his to the front door of his house and began to survey the length and the breadth of his possessions. “This is my estate,” he said; and then with a flourish of his hand pointing in every direction, indicated the farms and the fields, the houses and the homesteads that belonged to him. “But,” said his friend, “I know an old lady who lives on one of those farms and she can claim more than you could ever have shown me today, for she can say ‘Christ is mine.’” “He shall choose our inheritance for us.”

**Verse 5. “God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.”** And this same Jesus, says the Word of God, shall descend again with “a shout”, with the voice of “a trumpet.” No fact so universally ignored and neglected than this greatest fact of all, that,

“This same Jesus whom ye have seen go into heaven, shall so *come again* in like manner as ye have seen him go.”

**Verse 7. “... sing ye praises with understanding.”** Sound doctrine praises God, but from the great attention paid by some to the mere music, we feel sadly sure that the sense has no effect upon them. Is it not a sin to be tickling men’s ears with sounds when we profess to be adoring the Lord? What has a sensuous delight in organs, anthems, etc., to do with devotion? Do not men mistake physical effects for spiritual impulses? Do they not often offer to God strains more calculated for human amusement than for divine acceptance? An understanding enlightened of the Holy Spirit is only fully capable of offering worthy praise.

*F. H. Spurgeon*

**Verse 7. “... sing ye praises with understanding.”** Let *sense* and *sound* go together. Let your *hearts* and *heads* go with your voices. Understand what you sing, and sing what you understand.

*A. Clarke*

**Verse 8. “God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon *the throne of his holiness*.”** God has a *throne of holiness*, for which He is to be feared by all men. He also has a *throne of grace*, for which He is to be loved by His redeemed. He also has a *throne of glory*, for which He is to be praised by His whole creation.

*Hits to the Village Preacher*

**“The princes of the people are gathered together ... for *the shields of the earth belong unto God* ...”** It is God alone who defends and preserves the world. The sacred writer expressly uses the word “shields” in the plural number, for, considering the various and almost innumerable dangers which unceasingly threaten every part of the world, the providence of God must necessarily interpose in *many* ways, and make use, as it were, of many shields and bucklers.

*John Calvin*

# *Paul and the Churches*

*By J. C. Philpot*

If we examine the features of the New Testament churches as reflected in the inspired page, and seek to gather from that mode of internal evidence the spiritual condition of each, we shall find that though in Christ Jesus, all were one, yet in grace and gift, in state and standing, in knowledge and experience, in walk and conduct they widely differed from one another.

Thus *the church at Rome* seems to have been distinguished above her sister churches for the strength of her faith. “I thank my God,” says the apostle, “through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.” (Romans 1 verse 8) So conspicuous and eminent was the faith of the Roman believers that they had become an object of universal mention and thankfulness among the churches. And this seems to be one reason why the apostle in his Epistle to the Romans dwells so fully and largely upon justification, they being able above other churches to enter experimentally into the glorious doctrine of justification by faith in the righteousness of the Son of God. Thus the whole church to the end of time profits by the strength of their faith; for had they been weak in faith they could not have received an epistle so fully declaring the way whereby a sinner stands justified before God by the imputation of the obedience of Christ without the works of the law.

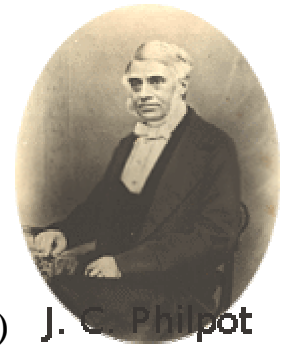
The *Corinthian church* was particularly favoured with the gifts of utterance and knowledge, as the apostle declares: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you; so that ye came behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 1 verses 4 to 7) These



gifts indeed had their attendant perils, for we find the apostle warning them against being puffed up thereby, and assuring them that they might speak with the tongues of men and of angels, have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and yet be nothing. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 8 verses 1; and chapter 13 verse 2).

The *Galatian Churches* had unhappily become “removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel,” which the apostle declares was really “not another,” as not being worthy of the name of gospel, but was a perversion of the gospel of Christ. (Galatians chapter 1 verses 6 and 7) They had thus strayed from the green pastures and still waters of gospel grace, and got upon the barren heath of legal service; had left the warm sunshine of Mount Zion, and become entangled in the smoke of Mount Sinai.

The *church at Philippi* was suffering under persecution, for to it we read “was given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians chapter 1 verse 29): and yet it continued firm in “the fellowship of the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians chapter 1 verse 5)



J. C. Philpot

There was also in it a great spirit of love and liberality; for no church communicated with Paul as concerning giving and receiving but it only. (Philippians chapter 4 verse 15). The wealthy Corinthians allowed him to preach to them the gospel of God freely, suffering the poorer church at Philippi to supply that which was lacking to him (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 11 verses 7 to 9); proving, as is often the case, the greater willingness of the poor than of the rich to give to the cause and servants of God.

The *churches of Ephesus and of Colosse* seem to have been further advanced in knowledge, and more fully and firmly established in the truth than most of the other New Testament churches, the former especially having had the benefit of Paul’s personal ministry for three years. They were therefore better qualified to receive those deep epistles which were severally addressed to them, in which the grandest and most glorious mysteries of our most holy faith are unfolded with a

wisdom and a power which seem to leave us ever learners and never able to grasp them fully to our satisfaction.

The *church at Thessalonica*, was inferior to that at Rome in faith, to that of Corinth in gifts, to that at Ephesus in knowledge, and yet was one of the most favoured in the New Testament. The two epistles which Paul sent them were the first which ever issued from his pen, and were written to them in the early days of their profession, about a year after the gospel had “come to them not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.” They had been much persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and had “received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.” (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 5 and 6) There was also one feature in their Christian character which shone forth with distinguished lustre – brotherly love – according to the prophet’s own testimony: “But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.” (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 9) Blessed mark of heavenly grace! The apostle also seems to have been peculiarly attached to them, for he says, “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 8) The reason of his great love to them appears to have been, first, the power which he felt in his own soul in preaching to them the word of life, for he calls to their mind, “Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake;” and, secondly, the way in which they received the word from his lips, which made him say, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? *For ye are our glory and joy.*” (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 19 and 20).

# **Eternally Purchased, Yet Continuously Penitent**

**A Religious Query answered by J. G. Vos.**

## **Question:**

If a person's sins - past, present and future sins - are all forgiven when he is justified, then why should a Christian daily confess sin and pray for forgiveness, throughout his life?

## **Answer:**

This problem has puzzled many Christians. The key to its solution lies in the distinction between justification and adoption. Justification and adoption, although simultaneous and inseparable, are nevertheless two distinct acts of God, and they involve two distinct relationships between the believer and God.

In justification, God is our Judge; in adoption, God is our Father. Justification makes us citizens of God's Kingdom; adoption makes us members of God's family. Justification is a judicial act, which concerns the legal penalty of sin and the legal requirement of absolute righteousness. Adoption is a matter of personal relationship, which concerns our position as children in God's family, and our enjoyment of the light of His countenance.

Justification, on the ground of the blood and righteousness of Christ, settles for all eternity the question of the Christian's standing in relation to the law of God. In justification God declares, once and forever, that the penalty of the law has been satisfied, and that by reason of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the Christian is positively and absolutely righteous in God's sight. This is done once for all; it never need nor can be repeated. To all eternity, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Justification is a permanent final transaction.

Adoption, on the other hand, concerns the relation of the Christian to God as his heavenly Father. The penalty of the law has been satisfied, and the righteousness demanded by the law has been imputed. All that is finished business. But by reason of his continuing sinful nature the Christian still daily sins against God in word, thought and deed. These daily sins cannot bring the Christian into condemnation. They cannot take away his permanent justification. They cannot have the slightest effect on his eternal safety. But they can and do displease God, the Christian's heavenly Father. They are violations of the holiness of the family of God.

If these daily sins are not promptly repented of and confessed, they will have serious consequences in the believer's life. True, they will not take away his justification or his eternal salvation. But they will have serious consequences in the present life. They will harden the believer's own conscience, grieve the Holy Spirit, and bring God's chastening upon the Christian in the form of suffering of some kind. They will also destroy the believer's present usefulness in Christian service. And they will cast a deep gloom upon his soul, as the light of God's countenance is withdrawn. Read Psalm 32 and see how miserable David felt during the interval between his great sin and his confession of that sin. But if David had died during the interval, he would instantly have gone to heaven, for he was a justified man.

The chastening which God visits upon his sinning children has absolutely nothing to do with the judicial punishment of sin. As far as the judicial penalty of sin is concerned, the believer has already had the sentence of death executed upon him in the person of his representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary. God's chastening of His children is not punishment but discipline. It proceeds not from His righteous wrath, but from His fatherly love and compassion. Its purpose is not to satisfy the righteous demands of the law, but to bring erring children back to a spiritual state.

The Christian's daily repentance and confession of sin concerns exclusively this relation to God as Father. It has nothing to do with the judicial guilt and penalty of sin, which is settled forever by

justification. Rather, it is necessary in order that right relations may exist within the family of God. When the believer truly repents and confesses, as David did, the light of God's countenance will be restored to his soul. In short, the believer should daily repent and confess his sins, not because of any danger of eternal damnation, but because he has offended his heavenly Father, and needs to have his consciousness of the Father's favour restored.



## **God's Penitentiary**

### **By W. P. Nicholson**

In these civilised lands of ours we have large prisons. What a shame it is to put men and women in such places of torment, robbing them of their liberties and privileges; separating men from their homes and families, and bring pain and shame on their friends. Many a time men are in gaol because they have committed one crime, and some of them we hang. Thousands of people are kept there against their will. Isn't it a shame to have such places, and to treat people like that?

Now, you would look at me with pity if I talked like that, and wonder where I came from. You would say, "Don't you know that these people are law-breakers? It is for their own good and the safety of the country that we put them there."

Do you think we have more sense than God, then? Who are the people who go to hell? They are men and women who rebelled against God and refused to be saved by the blood of His Son. What else can God do with them but put them in prison? Surely a man is mad who damns his own soul by wilfully rejecting Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Men and women! Hell is God's Penitentiary! If you continue to rebel against God, God has a gaol for you.

Let me give you some of the names used by God to describe the nature of this place: - A lake of fire – a bottomless pit – a devouring fire – a place of sorrows – where they wail – a place of weeping – a furnace – a place of torments – everlasting burnings – a place of filthiness – where they curse God – everlasting destruction – a place of outer darkness – where they have no rest – everlasting punishment – where they gnaw their tongues – a place prepared for the devil and his angels – where they cry for a drop of water – tormented with fire and brimstone – hell fire – hell – wrath to come.

If God had not been Love He might have made the way to hell easy and fast, but He has hedged the way there with thorns and barriers, and a man must work hard to get there. He has to stifle conscience again and again. He has to trample over the tears and prayers of God's people. He has to silence God's Word, quench the Holy Spirit, and trample underfoot the precious blood of Christ. All this before he succeeds in damning his soul forever.

## Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

This month I want to tell you about a very brave Christian man who was killed by wicked men many many years ago just because he was preaching and telling men and women, boys and girls, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. The man's name was Stephen.

You see, after Jesus was crucified on the cross many people repented of their sins and became Christians, and one such person was Stephen.

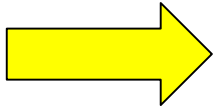
One day, as some foreign Jews were meeting in the Synagogue to study the Scriptures, Stephen went there to preach the gospel. But the leaders argued with him about his teaching, and they tried to prove

that Jesus was not the Christ, the Saviour. However, God gave Stephen the right words to say, so that the leaders couldn't answer him, and had to go away without a word. This made them very angry with Stephen; they couldn't answer him, so they told lies about him, and got other men to tell lies, saying, "We have heard Stephen speak against Moses and against God." They told so many lies that soon the rulers and Scribes in Jerusalem seized Stephen and put him to trial.

His accusers told all their lies again. The High Priest then turned to Stephen and asked, "Are these things true?" Stephen stood up bravely, and beginning at the times of Abraham, right up to the time when they crucified Jesus, Stephen steadfastly spoke out about the Jews disobedience to God. The Lord gave Stephen great power to speak, and he finished with these words; "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." When he said this they were filled with fury and stuck their fingers in their ears, so that they wouldn't hear any more of what Stephen was saying. Then they rushed at him and dragged him outside the city and threw large stones at him. Even then, Stephen held fast to this faith in Jesus, and he lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." As the stones struck his body, he then knelt down and cried out loudly, "Lord, do not blame them for this sin," and then his body was still for he was dead.

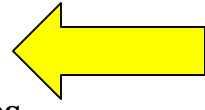
Well boys and girls, I don't think that is very likely to happen to any of us today in this country, but, I wonder, do we have the same faith in Jesus as Stephen had, so that when we hear people speaking wrongly about Jesus we want to speak the truth, no matter how we might be ridiculed or criticised for it.

Mrs Seaton.



## **The One Thing Needful**

**From “Authority” by Dr. M. Lloyd Jones**



Let me end this section with one further story. There was an old preacher in Wales about one hundred and fifty years ago who was invited to preach at a preaching convention held in a little town. The people had already assembled, but the preacher had not come. So the local minister and other leaders sent a maid back to the house where the preacher was staying to tell him that they were waiting for him and that everything was ready. The girl went and when she came back, she said: ‘I did not like to disturb him. He was talking to somebody.’ ‘Oh’, said they ‘that is rather strange, because everybody is here. Go back and tell him that it is after time and that he must come.’ So the girl went back again and again she returned and reported, ‘He is talking to somebody.’ ‘How do you know that?’ they asked. She answered: ‘I heard him saying to this other person who is with him, “I will not go and preach to those people if you will not come with me”.’ ‘Oh, it is all right’, replied the ministers. ‘We had better wait.’

The old preacher knew that there was little purpose in his going to preach unless he knew of a certainty that the Holy Ghost was going with him and giving him authority and power.

You and I, however, often preach without Him, and all our cleverness and learning, and all our science and all our apologetics lead to nothing because we lack the authority of the Holy Ghost.