

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 90 issued May 2011

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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



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Sights that Gladden

The Pastor's Letter (February 1973)

My Dear Friends,

One of the most comforting sights that was afforded that good man Stephen as he was called to give up his life in the cause of the gospel in Acts chapter seven, must surely have been right at the outset of that storm of malice and abuse. As his hearers began to “gnash on him with their teeth,” he was enabled, by the grace of God, to **“Look up steadfastly into heaven and behold the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”** (Verse 55)

In any time of trial or trouble, we can think of no more comforting or consoling sight than the glory of our God who dwells in the heavens; for there He dwells, far above all the effects of men's hatred and abuse, and there, the believing child of God dwells in Him through Jesus Christ the Lord. Stephen was undaunted and unafraid, in the fullest sense of the word, of all that men could do to him; and, no doubt, if any apprehensive thoughts had risen within his mind when those men of the Jewish court rushed upon him, he would have been enabled to quell his every anxiety with that great and glorious vision of the glory of his God and Christ at His right hand.

Stephen points us right up to the source of all comfort for our souls in this sight of God glorified before him in his time of deepest need and trial. But, Stephen also exhorts us to be in the way of receiving such a comforting and consoling sight for our times of opposition and adversity. For, surely, the good man teaches us this, that the comforting sight of the glory of God was, in the first place, afforded to him as one who had lived so much for the promotion of that glory upon the earth. Read the sermon that he preached to those men and which caused such animosity to rise up against him; it is supremely spiritual, and undercuts all the false notions that those men had held dear to their hearts and which had caused them to “crucify the Lord of Glory.” It was no mean task for Stephen to preach and to

live the way that he did, but the glory of the Lord so pervaded his life that, like one that came after him, he could “do no other” but stand and show forth the praise of Him who had redeemed him. It was little more, then, than an extension of his standing to turn from the face of those before whom he had so fearlessly set forth the glory of God, to look up into heaven and see that same glory that had captivated his life and his tongue.

We purposely write but a few words this month that we might all take hold of that comforting principle; would we know those “sights that gladden” in our every need? Then, how particular we must be that we live to display that same majesty of God before men.

Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton

**How to be a
Successful**



Backslider!

“It is a miserable thing to be a backslider. Of all unhappy things that can befall a man, I suppose it is the worst. A stranded ship, and eagle with a broken wing, a garden covered with weeds, a harp without strings, a Church in ruins – all these are sad sights; but a backslider is a sadder sight still.” – J. C. Ryle.

The golden rule of backsliding is “**a little at a time.**” Backsliding cannot be achieved overnight; it takes time and effort to be a really successful backslider. Most people make the mistake of believing that

some great sin will start them on the road to successful backsliding, but this is a grievous error. When we hear of Christians falling into some disastrous sin, it is more likely to be the result of steady backsliding than the cause of it. A brick wall doesn't collapse without there being some reason, such as decaying mortar or crumbling foundations. When Christians fall, you can be assured that there has been some steady decaying, or serious crumbling, somewhere.

To the would-be backslider here is some sound advice:

(Firstly) You must abandon the practice of prayer. However, this must be done very carefully, and with as little fuss as possible. Don't give up praying altogether, otherwise you will frighten your conscience into action and that is fatal. Remember the secret is **“a little at a time.”** Don't be in a desperate hurry; try to be as busy as you can, preferably in Christian work, so that you have less and less time to devote to prayer. You can always quieten your conscience by telling it that while you haven't been praying as much as you should, you have at least been doing the Lord's work in other ways.

(Secondly) You must stop reading the Bible. But again, remember to ease your way out gently or you'll have your conscience shouting at you. Some have found it useful to substitute the reading of good Christian books instead of the Bible, and then quietly to drop these off. In this way you hardly notice that you have stopped reading the Bible!

(Thirdly) You must misuse all opportunities for Christian fellowship. It is advisable not to break off contact with other Christians, otherwise your conscience will prick you, and one of your friends might become suspicious, and try to help you. When you meet with other Christians don't talk about the Lord Jesus Christ, but about other things. Discuss events, people, books, the weather, the latest fashions, anything, in fact, but the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Fourthly) You must get as much of a worldly spirit into your life as your conscience will allow. There are several ways in which you can

do this. Love of money is a sure winner, as long as you remember to call it “thrift.” This is a very respectable sin and will hardly be noticed by your Christian friends. Again, under a cloak of spiritual zeal, you can dabble in all sorts of worldly alliances which will help to weaken your spiritual resistance. For example, you might engage in an intimate friendship with an unbeliever of the opposite sex, and justify it on the grounds that you may win this one for Christ. Many a Christian has been kept in a healthy state of backsliding by this means.

(Fifthly) You must soon as possible make a resolution that one day you will mend your ways. This is very important because it helps to subdue even the slightest twinges of conscience. You can always say that you intend to do something about matters “one day.” But, remember, don’t decide when that “one day” will be; keep it as vague as possible, and try not to think too much about it.

(Last of all) You must try to forget that backsliding brings great dishonour to God. Never allow this thought to stay in your mind for a moment, otherwise you cannot succeed as a backslider. Say to yourself “I’m not hurting anyone, and – in any case – if anyone suffers it will be me.” Refuse to think of the dishonour that a backsliding Christian brings to God. Tell yourself that **you** are the only one that will suffer. If once you begin to realise that backsliding drags down the Name of god into the mire, you won’t succeed. Fear of dishonouring Him is one of the chief deterrents.

“Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.”

(Jeremiah chapter 2 verse 19)

“ I will heal their backsliding, I will love thee freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.”

(Hosea chapter 14 verse 4)

(This article was originally printed as a Tract written by Derek O. Swann and was available from Rushworth Literature Enterprise)

George Whitefield on: -

ZEAL. I love those that thunder out the Word. The Christian world is in a deep sleep. Only a loud voice can awaken them out of it. Had we a thousand hands and tongues, there is employment enough for them all: people are every where ready to perish for lack of knowledge. As the Lord has been pleased to reveal His dear Son in us, oh; let us stir up that gift of God, and with all boldness preach Him to others. Freely we have received, freely let us give.

MIRACLES. What need is there for them, now that we see greater miracles every day done by the power of God's Word? Do not the spiritually blind now see? Are not the spiritually dead now raised, and the leprous souls now cleansed, and have not the spiritually poor the gospel preached unto them? And if we have the thing already, which the miracles were only intended to introduce, why should we tempt God in requiring further signs? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.



Gleanings In the Psalms

(Psalm 49)

Verse 1. *“Hear this, all ye people: give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world.”* In all cases, as far as my experience and observations reach, they who have received partial religious instruction, will hear a new minister so long as he tells them what they already know or believe. This is the standard by which they try his doctrine. But if he attempts to rectify their errors, however manifest, they will take offence, and probably forsake his ministry, accusing him of some deviation from sound doctrine as their reason for so doing.

Thomas Scott

Verse 6. “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches.” The shape of money agrees well with the condition of it; for it is made round, because it is so apt to run from a man. Thus death makes a violent divorce between men and their goods, when it is said to them, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

J. D.

Verse 7. “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” Rich men can do great things, but here is a thing that they cannot do: “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.”

Verse 9. “That he should still live forever, and not see corruption.” They eat as if they meant to die tomorrow, and yet build as if they were never to die. They neither rightly remember their mortality nor their immortality.

Robert Leighton

Verse 11. “Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever ...” Mr. A. was a wealthy farmer in Massachusetts, about sixty years of age, whose life ambition it had been to acquire property. His neighbour B. owned a small farm, which came very close to A’s extended domain, and was quite a blot on his landscape. B. became financially embarrassed, and was sued, judgments were obtained, but at the last minute, the debt was paid off without the farm having to be sold. When A. heard of the payment of the debt, he was grieved, but consoled himself with this thought – “Well, B. is an old man, and cannot live long, and when he dies I can buy the lot.” B. was fifty-eight, A. was sixty! Reader, do you ever expect to die?

Irvine’s Anecdotes

Verse 14. “Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them ...” The unbelievers are laid in the grave “like sheep.” They lived like wolves or lions, but are laid in the grave like sheep. If it be asked, why like sheep? I answer, not on account of the innocency of their lives, but on account of their impotency in their death. As it has been said, when once death took in hand to lay them in the grave, they

could make no more resistance than a sheep against a wolf or a lion. And when death has thus laid them in the grave, then, saith the Psalmist, “Death shall feed on them,” just as a lion does upon a sheep, or a wolf upon its prey.

Joseph Caryl

“Verse 17. “When he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.” A believer of great reputation for wisdom and faithfulness was met by a student just entering the University of which he was a professor. “My parents have just given me leave to study the law,” said the young man, “and I have come to this University on account of its reputation in the subject.” “And when you have got through your studies,” said the older man, “What then?” “Then I shall take my doctor’s degree.” “And then?” asked the professor again. “And then I shall have a number of difficult cases to manage which will increase my fame, and I shall gain a reputation.” “And then?” repeated the professor. “Why, then there cannot be a question, but I shall be promoted to some high office or other; I shall make money and grow rich.” “And then?” came the question again. “And then,” spoke up the young man, “I shall live in honour and dignity, and be able to look forward to a happy old age.” “And then?” insisted the believing Professor. “And then,” hesitated the student, “And then I shall die.” “And then?” asked the old man for the last time.

The Clerical Library

Verse 20. “... like the beasts that perish.” Take a man that has lived like the fool in the gospel, and tell me, what has that man done for his immortal soul more than a beast has done for its perishing soul?

Francis Cheynell

Verse 20. “Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.” He begins in verse 1 with a call to “Hear,” and concludes with a description of those who refuse to “Understand”.

Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

Do you have to be “called” in the morning, or do you wake up at the right time, a knock on the door, or a shake and the words: “Time to get up!” It is always good to be ready on time; ready for breakfast, ready for school, always ready in the morning. You will be ready for the whole day if you first hear and obey God’s call in the morning.

He called Moses, saying, “Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to be in the top of the Mount.” You cannot hear God’s voice in your ears, but you can hear it in your heart. So, when you get up in the morning do not leave your bedside without kneeling down and presenting yourself to God. Ask him to keep you in the right way, the way of truth and goodness, all through the day, for when you do this, you can start the day in earnest, wherever you are, at school, or at work, or at play. Each one has something to do which is their own special bit. God gives to each of His children some task, however small it may be, and He wants us to do our work faithfully, heartily, and with joy, “As to the Lord.” (Col 3:23.)

Jesus spoke about a man who went away leaving his servants in charge of his house. Each one had something to do, and the porter was commanded to watch at the door. If the Master returned without warning, what then? Doing their work faithfully, expecting their Master to come any moment, those servants would be happy to welcome him and eager to show him the house, clean and ready, and safe. They would be happy at his smile of approval and receive the reward he had for them. But if those servants left to themselves neglected their duties and played about all day, or quarrelled amongst themselves, wasting time in argument, what then? The Master would return when they were not looking for him and find his house in disorder, work at a standstill – nothing being done. No smile for those servants, no reward for them.

The Lord Jesus asks and expect us all to do our bit, to learn our lessons or fill in our little daily tasks in such a way that at any time He may come to look at them and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have done little things faithfully today; I will soon give you greater things to do for Me.”

Love,
Mrs Seaton

John Bunyan and
Holy Mr Gifford
By
Alexander Whyte

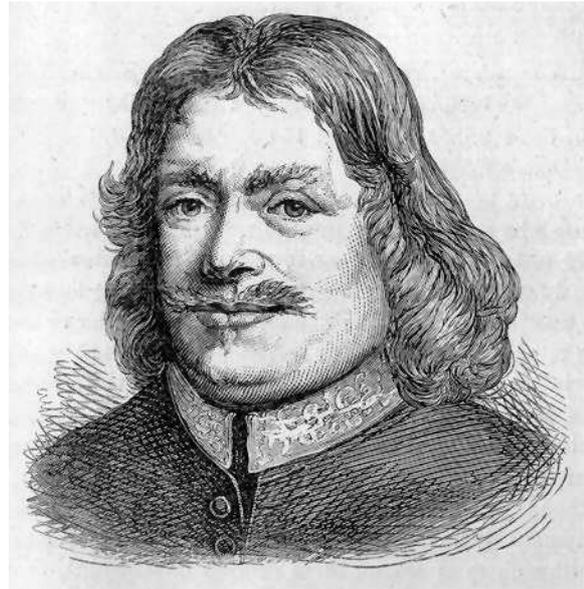
“At this time I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God’s grace, was much for my stability.”

John Bunyan.

I must first tell you something about holy Mr. Gifford himself. Well, John Gifford was the very minister for John Bunyan; for in everything but literary genius John Gifford had been a John Bunyan himself, only unspeakably worse.

John Gifford had at one time been a Royalist officer in the great civil war; and like so many officers and men of that bad side he was a man of a very bad life ... After some hairbreadth escapes Gifford was enabled somehow to set up as a Doctor in the town of Bedford, where he continued his old life of debauchery and was notorious far and near for his hatred and ill-usage of the Puritan people. But, one night, after losing all his money at cards ... Gifford was led to open a book of the famous Puritan Robert Bolton, when something that he read in that book took such a hold of him that he lay in agony of conscience for several weeks afterwards. “At last,” as his old kirk-session record still extant has it, “God did so plentifully discover to him the forgiveness of his sins for the sake of Christ that all his life after he lost not the sight of God’s countenance, save only about two days before he died.” No sooner did John Gifford become a changed man than, like Saul of Tarsus, he openly joined himself to those whom he had hitherto persecuted, and ultimately he became their beloved pastor. The three

or four poor women whom Bunyan saw one day sitting at a door in the sun and talking about the things of God were all members of John Gifford's free church congregation. And in long after days John Bunyan immortalised John Gifford as his evangelist in the Pilgrim's Progress. Such then was holy Mr Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was so much for John Bunyan's stability.



John Bunyan

John Gifford's pulpit was ... blessed to young Bunyan ... And Bunyan long afterwards went back upon and signalised these four features of John Gifford's pulpit-work – its Scriptural character, its doctrinal character, its experimental character, and its evangelical character ... He tells us in his own inimitable way how his minister taught him to read his New Testament; and, especially how he taught him to employ his eyes upon Jesus Christ in his New Testament ... “Under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, O how my soul was led on from truth to truth! Even from the birth and cradle of the Son of God, to His Ascension and second coming from heaven to judge the world. There was not one part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus but I was orderly led into it. Methought I was as if I had seen Him born, as if I had seen Him grow up, as if I had seen Him walk through this world from His cradle to His cross; to which also, when He came, I saw how gently He gave Himself to be hanged and nailed upon it for my sins and my wicked doings. Also, as I mused on this His progress, that Scripture dropped on my spirit, “He was ordained for the slaughter.”

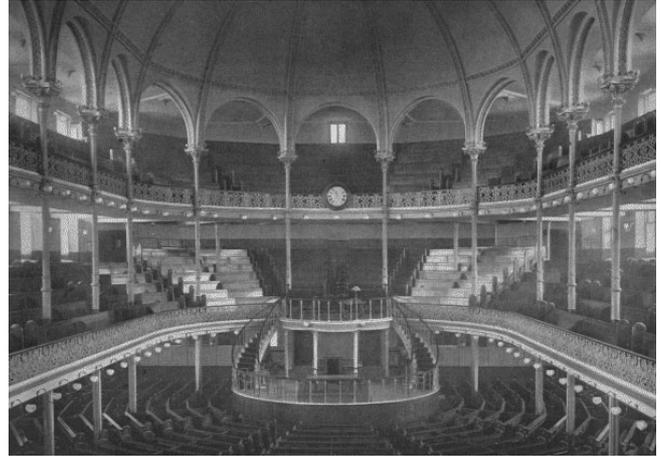
What a contrast to the time when the young Bunyan could not away with the Scriptures. And when he said, “What is the Bible? Give me a ballad, a newsbook, ‘George on Horseback’, or ‘Bevis of Southampton.’ Give me some book that teaches curious arts, or that tells old fables; but for the Holy Scriptures I cared not.” What a happy service John Gifford did to John Bunyan, and to us, and to all the world!

And, then, all his after days, John Bunyan – tinker, preacher; great writer, and great saint of God – went back on John Gifford’s **doctrinal** preaching with an ever-increasing gratitude ... “At this time also, I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God’s grace, was much for my stability. His doctrine was as seasonable to my soul as the former and the latter rain in their season. Wherefore I found my soul, through grace, very apt to drink in his doctrine.” Both John Gifford’s day and John Bunyan’s day were the greatest days of doctrinal preaching the church of Christ has seen since Paul’s day. Whereas your day and mine is the weakest in doctrine that the church of Christ has ever had to come through. But the day of sound and deep doctrine in religion must come back again. All real knowledge takes the form of doctrine. A doctrine is a truth that is so sure that it can be taught and can be trusted to ... our statesmen, and our business men, and our scientific men, and our artistic men are all trusted and are all honoured and are all rewarded just in the measure that they master the foundation doctrines of their several professions and services, and then go on to put those doctrines into practice. And it surely cannot continue to be, **that the one thing needful for all men to know should be left to stand without a foundation** in men’s understandings, as well as without a hold over their hearts and their lives ... All other doctrines, whether of philosophy, or of science, or of art, have been the slow and the gradual discovery of human observation and experiment. But the doctrines of grace are of another kind, and they come from another world. Unless they are the greatest delusion and the greatest snare the doctrines of grace are the very wisdom of God, and the very power of God, to the salvation of sinful and suffering men. And in the word of God those doctrines stand revealed from heaven in all their fulness and in all their assurance of grace and truth, and in a fulness to which no man is ever to add or is ever to take away.

“At this time I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God’s grace, was much for my stability.”

SPURGEON AND THE TABERNACLE

I am often afraid lest, with such a church as this, we should not do what the Church at large and the world expect of us. We number two thousand three hundred or more in church-fellowship; but if we are all idle, or if the most of you are idle, it would be better for me to have had a hundred or so of earnest workers.



There is nothing one dislikes so much as to be reputed to have what we have not. Why, I read, I should think in a dozen newspapers, some time back, the information that I received from America £1,000 a-year. I should like to see it. But just that kind of feeling comes over me when people say, “What a church there is there! What a deal they must do for Christ!” Ah! But if you do not, then what a poor man your minister is to have the reputation of being so rich in the efforts of his people, and then not to have them doing anything!

Oh, don't do that! I know you may say I am not worthy of you; but I pray you, dear friends, let us try to be worthy of one another; let us fight side-by-side for Christ and for His cause; let us tell upon this neighbourhood; and let us make men know that there is a church in London that does pray, that does wrestle with God, that does work, that does give to His cause, and that will spend and be spent until the members are willing even to lay down their lives upon the altar of God for the promotion of His kingdom.