

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



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# Justification, Sanctification And Indwelling Sin

(The Pastor's Letter February 1974)

Dear Friends,

The title of our letter in this edition covers those subjects that can lead into erroneous paths, and in these days the misunderstanding of the facts breed all forms of error.

Let me explain. There is a vast difference between Justification and Sanctification. Justification is that great sovereign act of God whereby He pronounces all His people absolutely forgiven and cleared from their sins through the merit of the blood of His only Begotten Son. Once a believer is Justified he can never be *Un*justified. The debt is paid, the demands of justice are met, the Holiness of God is satisfied, and the soul is delivered from going down into the pit, for God has found a ransom. Nowhere is it better stated, perhaps, in the writings of men, than in that great hymn of Augustus Toplady's:

“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.”

That is justification to a “T”. And Justification, we may add, as held under the highest terms of the doctrine in the glorious light of the doctrines of grace. The devil will never possess one elect soul for whom Christ poured out His blood. As Toplady puts it in so many words – God is a Just God who must demand the payment for all our sins. But He is such a Just God that He will not “twice demand” that payment. If Christ has suffered once for the sins of His people, enduring for them the pangs of death and hell, then, they will never be

called to suffer all over again for those sins already discharged through the blood of the Redeemer. Reverently speaking, that would lay our gracious God open to the most serious charge of injustice, and again, the devil would rejoice in the situation. On the one hand, the devil could accuse the Saviour's blood of impotency: that it couldn't, in fact, redeem from hell the soul for which it was shed – for here is that soul in hell with the devil now! On the other hand, he could accuse the great judge of all the earth, who always doeth right, of unjust proceedings: that He extracted payment for the sins of one of the elect, first of all, from Christ, and then, from the soul himself. But this can never be.

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,  
He will not, He cannot, desert to its foes.”

This is our doctrine of Justification, and we rejoice to the very fullest degree that “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

But Justification in no way annuls Sanctification, and the child of God is to know the rod of correction, the chastising hand, and the punishments exacted by parenthood upon him – even the Parenthood of God who has adopted him into His only family by a sovereign work of grace to his soul. In Justification, God works as a Judge – pronouncing the soul innocent of damnation and condemnation on account of having received that suitable ransom for the souls of the condemned, so that, indeed, “there is therefore now *no condemnation* to them.” But, in Sanctification, God acts more like a Physician – a Surgeon – bringing the soul to spiritual health until that great day of resurrection when the mortal has completely put on immortality, and the corruptible has become incorruptible. Needless to say, the Surgeon's work is not painless, as he probes and cuts away the offending growths, and treats and re-treats the wounds that have been made, and which must be healed. Another figure which the Bible uses, is the “purifying” of gold or silver. The old dross and impurities must be removed, and there is only one real way to do this and that is by putting the metals through the “refiners' fires.”

But, one of the most precious figures in the whole of the Bible in connection with the work of God sanctifying His people, is that figure of a father with his children. Probably the classic passage in the New Testament is in that 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which speaks of God chastising His sons as any father would chastise his children. Why do we chastise our children? Because we hate our children? Surely not! But, because we love our children and have a true desire after their developing well-being. We may hate the wrong that we punish them for, but the purpose of the punishment is to correct the child and bring him to the place where obedience will be for his good. So, it is with God and His children. When we chastise our children with a true and sincere eye for their good, we are but following the Divine pattern which God Himself has deigned to establish for His dealing with us.

Remember Jonah! What an illustration he should be for each and every one of us. Remember how he was put through the school of correction in the belly of that great fish, until he acknowledges the absolute right of God to do what He will with His own – “Salvation is of the Lord.” What a state he was in! Look at him prior to that: he has decided to go and seek out a ship and go to Tarshish, and as he gets down to the port of Joppa, there is a ship all ready and bound for that land; he gets a “booking” without any apparent difficulty, and obviously has enough where-with-all to pay the fare; and off he goes. One door after another opens in his favour! Yet, my friends, Jonah was in a ten-times more perilous position when all seemed to be falling out to his favour, than he was ever in when God had cast him into the stenching, steaming body of that great fish that He had prepared with the omnipotent hands of a loving Heavenly Father. Once the rod fell on Jonah for his disobedience, there was the unqualified evidence that he had a Father in heaven who cared for the soul of His child, as well as for the glory of His own great Name. And that’s exactly what Paul says in that epistle to the Hebrews – the Father’s chastising rod is the proof our eternal sonship to Him. No rod – no adoption of sons. Therefore, rather than rebel under chastisement; or, what is more popular, *deny* that there can be any such thing because we are “eternally-secure” and are called to have “no more blue Mondays,” what we must learn to do is to ***Know the***

*doctrine experimentally*, that the rod might be to our good and to the glory of our God.

Of course, there are all-too, many professing Christians today who believe that they have little to be corrected for. This stems from a low concept of sin in our lives and in our hearts. When God's rod falls in such cases, there is a desire to pass it off as some irritation of the devil, or some course of events that have been unfavourable to them. This is, surely, to "despise the chastening of the Lord," which Paul warns us against in Hebrews. The other wrong path that can be so easily trod is to "faint" under the rod of correction. Again, that danger is made clear when Paul warns us that no "chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous..."; but then adds the great outcome of the work – "nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness..."

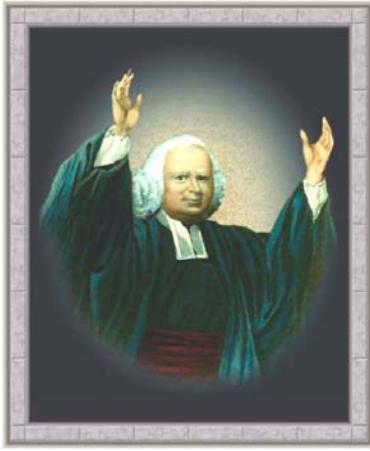
Neither are we to despise God's rod – He knows that we have need of it, even if we are slow to admit that need ourselves – or, wilt under God's rod, for it is but to bring us nearer to Him as to the will of our Father. Sin remains within us, *but* we will never be condemned for that sin. This is our Justification unto life eternal. But, sin remains within us, *therefore*, we will ever be under the correcting hand of our gracious Father, Who would have us more and more to resemble the spotless Son of His own right hand. This is our Sanctification. We confuse both these aspects of our salvation to our own frustration, and place ourselves in danger of notions unbecoming the sons of God.

We are "little children, weak and apt to stray." We need a Father's hand, and need not be surprised when at times, it has to be a "heavy hand." And yet-

"A Fathers hand will never cause  
His child a needless tear."

Yours sincerely,  
W.J. Seaton

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1Thess. 4:3)



## George Whitefield (Part 4)

The characteristic theme of the preaching of George Whitefield was that of the new birth,” while the text that came to be almost continuously associated with him was that which unmistakably declared that “Except a man be born again, he shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.” Whitefield was a staunch upholder of the doctrines of God’s free and sovereign grace to sinners, and those doctrines had first begun to distil themselves into his heart and mind through the pens of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, with whom Whitefield had begun a correspondence.

It was in the year 1741 that Whitefield first visited Scotland at the invitation of the two Secession brothers, and the work of the great evangelist in Scotland sets before us another, and sometimes very neglected side of blessing, that is – the ground-work of the harvest. Who can say exactly “when” the Lord begins to gather together those elements and circumstances that ultimately result in a time of refreshing from the hand of the Lord. Yet, surely, He does very often grant us glimpses of the workings that we might learn to not grow weary in well-doing. As far back as the year 1678 we can see “the Lord of the harvest” already at work. At that time, there was a young Professor of Divinity in the University of Aberdeen. He died at the tender age of 28, and by the standards of University Professors never “accomplished” much in the way of literary attainments, for he produced only one book. Yet, what a book that was to prove to be. The young man’s name was Henry Scougal, and the book was, of course, “The Life of God in the Soul of Man.” That book that was to make such an impression in the life of the young George Whitefield at Oxford – “that excellent treatise,” as he called it, and which enabled him to see “what true religion was.” So that, Whitefield, although coming to Scotland for the first time, was, in one respect, returning to the land that had given him spiritual birth under the hand of the Lord.

Other factors had also been at work in Scotland, preparing the ground from which he, with many others, began to reap the ripe sheaves to the glory of God. Old John Bonar had laboured away at Torphican from 1692, seeing only the occasional soul brought into true saving faith. James Robe had begun his ministry at Kilsyth in 1713, but had to wait twenty-seven lean years before the garner began to be filled with new corn. But, one of the greatest factors in the religious life of Scotland that was about to emerge and to enter into such blessings during the times of Whitefield, was inaugurated by the Lord through His servant, Thomas Boston of Ettrick.

Boston was inducted to the ministry in 1700, and settled at Simprin, a parish of only eighty-three souls. Yet, out of that situation, the Lord was to produce yet another harvest tool. In the home of one of the members of the congregation, Boston discovered an old Puritan volume, long out of print and circulation. It was Edward Fisher's "Marrow of Modern Divinity." Boston was immediately impressed with the thrust of the book with regards to the call of the gospel for men to repent and be converted, and very soon had the work republished and widely distributed. The response was not at all what Boston had anticipated, and instead of the principles set forth in the book being widely embraced, they were, almost totally, rejected. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland condemned the book, and the number of "Marrow Men", as they came to be known, stood at only twelve. Some of these remained within the Established Church, but, the Erskines, with whom Whitefield was to have the correspondence, withdrew, forming the Associate Presbytery – The Secession Church. We must remember that this happened in the year 1733, two years before Whitefield was even converted. So that, although there was the "winter afore harvest," there were diligent labourers in God's husbandry doing the necessary works of winter that the harvest, might be reaped in its own season. "If the King of Zion hath already begun His circuit," preached old John Willison at Dundee, "and if He designed to ride in triumph through His churches, can we think He will pass by Scotland, where He hath a waiting and wrestling remnant, looking out and ready to stop Him with their cry?" His anticipation was well-rewarded, and among those who were best employed in the gathering of souls when Christ began his "ride in triumph through His churches" in Scotland, was the man, George

Whitefield, first enlightened in the gospel by a book from a young Scots Professor's hand, and led on into the mighty doctrines of that gospel by two worthy elect brothers of Scotland's realm.

We turn now, in concluding, to see something of the last few days of this faithful soldier upon the earth. The last time that he preached was in Exeter in the U.S.A. It was on the 29<sup>th</sup> September, 1770, and was a sermon delivered in the open air, under much physical hardship.

"Sir," said one of his friends to him, "you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." "True, sir," he said, and then began a short, but telling prayer: "Lord Jesus," he prayed, "I am weary *in* Thy work, but not *of* Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go on and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal Thy truth, then go home and die." We are told something of his valiant attempts to preach that day. "The subject of his remarks was 'Faith and Works.' He rose up sluggishly and wearily, as if worn down and exhausted by His stupendous labours ... sentence after sentence was thrown off in rough, disjointed portions, with out much regard to point or beauty. At length his mind kindled over a single idea, and an explosion of his lion-like voice roared to the extremities of the audience. He was speaking of the inefficiency of works to merit salvation, and he suddenly cried out in a tone of thunder, 'Works! Works! A man get to heaven by works! I would as soon think of climbing up to the moon on a rope of sand!' But the thunder of that fearful voice could not long be sustained ..." Yet, the great statement of that day's preaching was not to come in this whirlwind, but in the still, small voice which he concluded; "I go," he said, "to my everlasting rest. My sun has risen, shone, and is setting – nay, it is about to rise and shine for ever. I have not lived in vain. And though I could live to preach Christ a thousand years, I die to be with Him, which is far better."

He returned to Newburyport, for which the Lord would call him early the next morning to be with Himself.

It was a Saturday evening, and he hoped to preach there the next day. Many people met at the house where he was staying, and as he turned to retire for the evening, he paused on the stairway, candle in hand, and spoke the words of life once more in their hearing. It was a precious word, we are told, and before he had finished, the candle that

he had been holding had burned away in its socket. Very soon, one of his heart's desires was going to be realised, for he had often said "O that I may one day be lifted from the pulpit to the throne." Within a few hours George Whitefield was no more, for the Lord had taken him. The thoughts and sentiments of many, it has been said, were expressed in the words of prayer offered at the funeral by Daniel Rogers, one of Whitefield's spiritual children, when he suddenly burst into tears and exclaimed, "My father! My father! The chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

Some lines, written on an old, favourite chair of Whitefield's still in existence, seem appropriate to close with as a word to our hearts.

"If love of souls should e'er be wanting here,  
Remember me, for I am Whitefield's chair;  
I bore his weight, am witness to his fears,  
His earnest prayers, his interceding tears.  
This holy man was filled with love divine,  
Art thou the same? Sit down and call me thine."

(conclusion)



## *Providence*

One of the most notorious heretics ever to appear in the history of the church of Christ was the monk, Pelagius. Had in not been for the work and teaching of Augustine, the influence of Pelagius would have been, humanly speaking, universal and complete. However, the intervention of God is "wondrous in our eyes." On the same day that Pelagius was born in Britain, Augustine was born in Africa. Although God was going to permit a sifting time for His church on the earth, He was also preparing the fulfilment of His promise, that "when the enemy comes in like a flood, then shall the Lord raise up a standard."



## *Patronage Scotland's Hated Imposition*

One of the most hated impositions that the Church in Scotland in a bye-gone day had to tolerate, was that known as “Lay Patronage.” It was the system whereby the Laird or Duke who owned the land on which a church stood, had the right to place the minister of his own choice, regardless of what the people, or other ministers thought. The mind of the people was made known in no uncertain manner on many occasions; for example – “When the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery upon me was a-doing,” recalls one of those “imposed ministers, “Mr. Given (the minister of the church at Lugton) could not get near enough to me to lay his hands upon my head; but, stretching out his shepherd’s staff, he touched my head, and remarked – to the great diversion of the rest – ‘This will do well enough – timber to timber.’ It was an unkindly saying of Mr. Given,” continues the patron’s choice, “considering the time, and the place, and the temper of the people.” Another “intruded” pastor had a telling reply to his question, “Who made Paul a minister?” “It wasna the Duke of Queensberry at ony rate,” came the sharp retort, which closed the “catechising session.”



### **Gleanings in the Psalms (Psalm 58)**

*Verses 1 to 5 – David accuses his ungodly tormentors before God.  
Verses 6 to 8 – he calls on the Lord to pass His judgments on them.  
Verses 9 to 11 – he looks to the certainty of that judgment passed.*

**Verse 1. “Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O Congregation? Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?”** The enemies of David were a numerous and united band, and because they so unanimously condemned the persecuted one, they were apt to take it for granted

that their verdict was a right one. “What everybody says must be true,” is a lying proverb based upon the presumptions which come of large combinations. Have we not all agreed to hound the man to the death, and who dare hint that so many great ones can be mistaken.

C. H. Spurgeon

**Verse 2. “Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weight the violence of your hands in the earth.”** The psalmist does not simply say that they had wickedness *in* their hearts, but that they did “work” it there. The heart is a shop within – an underground shop – and there they did closely contrive, forge, and hammer out their wicked purposes and fit them into actions. “Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth,” says David, and that is an allusion to merchants who buy and sell by weight, and weigh their commodity to the very ounce.

Joseph Caryl

**Verse 3. “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.”** Of all sins, no sin can call Satan father like the sin of lying. All the corruption that is in us came from Satan, and yet, this sin of forging and lying is from the devil more than any other. Hence every man is a liar (Romans 3:4), and although each is a sinner in his own particular way, yet, in a special way every man is a liar. As we are in the body subject to all diseases, and yet, some more subject to one disease than another, so, in the soul, we are liable enough to all sins and some more so to one vice than another; *yet*, all are much inclined to lying. A liar then is as like the devil as ever he can look, and as unlike to God as ever he can be.

Richard Capel

**Verses 4-5. “... they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.”** “A Sermon For Preachers and Hearers.”

- (1) He charms with moral persuasion, promise, threatening etc.
- (2) He charms wisely, earnestly, affectionately, argumentatively.
- (3) He charms in vain; the will is averse

Hence the need of divine grace and of the gospel.

Hints to the Village Preacher

**Verses 4-5. "... deaf adders ...".** Those were deaf adders that our Lord spoke about when He said, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." No matter what kind of a message it was they were determined that they were not for listening. Isaiah knew the same thing before our Lord had come to the earth: "Lord, who hath believed our report," and every true preacher of the gospel has come to see the same spirit in action right up to the present day. There should be nothing like the deafness of a man's congregation to open his mouth in prayer unto the Lord that He will cause them to hear:

"They have heard the preacher's message,  
Truth by him has now been shown,  
But they need another Preacher  
From the everlasting throne:  
Application! Application!  
Is the work of God alone."

**Verse 8. "As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away ..."** David here alludes to the idea of the snail wasting itself as it goes, and uses it to describe the end of the wicked. The snail carries its own fortress on its back and retreats into it for protection; so the ungodly shelter in their own devices. But the end of one is as certain as the other.

Biblical Museum

**Verse 10. "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance..."** He will have no hand in meting it out, neither, will he rejoice in the spirit of revenge, but his righteous soul shall acquiesce in the judgements of God ... there is nothing in Scripture of that sympathy with God's enemies which modern traitors are so fond of parading as the finest species of benevolence. We shall at the last say, "Amen" to the condemnation of the wicked, and feel no disposition to question the ways of God with the impenitent.

C.H. Spurgeon



## A Letter from Mrs Seaton

Once upon a time, there was a poor widow who had one little girl. They were very poor, and so the mother worked hard by sewing for other people, and this is how she earned money for food.

The little girl watched her mother, day in and day out, sewing. Even when she was tired or ill the mother carried on working. One day when her mother had gone out, the little girl, who was called Betty, thought of a good plan to help her mummy, and she started on the big pile of sewing and mending. How happy she was helping her mum!

Later on that night, when Betty was tucked up in her bed, her mother sat down to get on with her work. As she looked at it, a big tender smile came on her face. You see, all the work Betty had done was all a mess. She wasn't a very good sewer, and her mummy had to unpick all that work and make it right. But that didn't matter to her mother. Her heart filled up with love for her little girl, because she saw that she had tried her best, and that made all the difference.

You know, boys and girls, it is good to try and help others, especially our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. But most of all, it is good to serve God and do the best we can for Him. Don't be put off by thinking that you are not bright, or clever, or rich – or any of those things. All that you are to do is to love the Lord Jesus and try your best for Him.

“O dearly, dearly has He loved,  
And we must love Him too;  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And *try* His works to do.”

Lots of love  
Mrs Seaton.