

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham



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The Iscariot Spirit!

(The Pastor's Letter August 1974)

Dear Friends,

How often the Word of God can drive people either into honesty or dishonesty – into transparent examination of themselves under its searching truth, or into a form of brazen behaviour which, if not checked and cured, ultimately exposes the true hypocrite that lurked in the Christian clothing of profession.

One of the most vivid examples of this is found in the Bible's account of our Lord's announcement that one of the number of those disciples is about to betray Him. Immediately, we are told, the twelve began to ask the Lord, “Lord is it I?” And that identical response to the Lord's words exhibits that ready potential of the human heart either to play the man or the hypocrite when the truth of God comes forcibly to it. It is easy, of course, to write off that incident by remembering that it was Judas Iscariot who was to betray the Lord, and so acted the hypocrite. But there is another side to the incident which speaks to the Lord's people in all generations, and that is the attitude of those eleven sincere disciples who also asked, “Lord, is it I?” Surely, if Judas played the dishonest hypocrite under that word of Christ, then the rest of the disciples “played the man” when that word of truth came so authoritatively into their midst that night.

What they showed was that healthy spirit of self-examination that belongs to the child of God under the infallible dictates of the word of truth. This is the principle involved in that night's proceedings. Most certainly they look to their own hearts first, and that, in itself is a good principle of conduct. Too often we look outwith our own hearts and lives for the explanation to those things that hinder and threaten the church of Christ in our day. Remember the spirit of McCheyne? “Lord, does the church need reviving? Then, Lord begin with me!” But, true and all as that principle is, there is an even more basic principle involved in those disciples' words. You see,

It was Jesus who said that one of them would betray Him, and they believed Jesus. It is as simple as that. If He said that one of them would betray Him, then that word was beyond disputing and the course of self-examination was inevitable.

One of those who asked (in John's gospel) was the apostle John himself - "that apostle whom Jesus loved." Who can understand the full nature of that sentence? Did Jesus love one disciple above the rest? The scriptures certainly single out John along those lines. But, here is the point, surely, John knew of that unique position that he held in the heart of Christ, yet, he, too, took his place on the witness stand - "Lord, who is it? Lord, is it I?" Even the knowledge of the Saviour's love so strangely shed abroad on that apostle of love couldn't for one minute eliminate that incontrovertible statement of Christ, and John must place himself under the umbrella of that statement until events display who the real betrayer is, because John is "one" of them of whom the Lord has spoken when He has said, "***One of you*** shall betray me."

The lesson is a humbling one, and yet, ever essential for our spiritual well-being. It becomes us ever to examine ourselves, remembering the potential of our human hearts for the hypocritical garb. But, above all things, we are duty-bound to examine ourselves in the light of God's infallible word which we claim to believe and be guided by. Does the word of God not say, "Take heed ... lest ye fall"? Does it not say this in essence, in numerous places on its pages? Yes it does; and it says it to the Lord's own people – indeed, "Loved" by Him from before the foundation of the world. And the personal application is beyond dispute: "Take heed lest ***ye*** fall ..."
Who? Believers! And, if I am a believer, then I am under obligation to "take heed", and not to imagine that I could never be found wanting in the things of salvation and witness and testimony.

We show our respect for, and our belief in, this Holy Word of God by giving serious attention to all that it has to say to us on this subject of our soul's salvation. To brush off the irksome challenges is not to be of that admirable spirit of these eleven saints of old at that

particular point in their Christian calling, and to give only a lip-assent is, surely, to have too much of the Iscariot spirit lurking within us. It will always be to our spiritual advantage to read those “warnings” of the word of God well, and to adopt that humble self-examining spirit - Who could be capable of these things? “Lord, is it I?”

This we should be more than enabled to do if we know anything at all about these old deceitful and wayward hearts of ours. But, again, far and beyond our human experience – valid and all as it may be in its own limitations – stands that impregnable rock of Holy Scripture, and when it speaks, let us listen well and so show our real and full acceptance of *all* its precepts and all its words of life.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton (1974)

Gleanings in the Psalms

(Psalm 64)



Whole Psalm. A Cry of God's Elect, when persecuted for righteousness' sake, to their Deliverer and sure Avenger ... How aptly a portion of this Psalm applies to the “Suffering Truth” Himself in the days of His affliction, when, pierced in His spirit by lying words, He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, needs not be pointed out.

A. Pridham

Verse 1. “Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer ...” It often helps devotion if we are able to use the voice and speak audibly; but even mental prayer has a voice with God that He will hear. We do not read that Moses had spoken with his lips at the Red Sea, and yet, the Lord said to him, “Why criest thou unto me?” Prayers which are unheard

on earth may be among the best heard in heaven. It is our duty to note how constantly David turns to prayers; it is his battleaxe and weapon of war: he uses it under pressure, whether of inward sin or outward wrath, foreign invasion or domestic rebellion. We shall act wisely if we make prayer to God our first and best trusted resource in every hour of need.

C. H. Spurgeon

Verse 2. “Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked ...”

Applied to Satan, we have ...

1. The Danger Considered.

- (I) The enemy, wicked, mighty, malicious, experienced.
- (II) His counsel: he tempts cunningly and with deliberation.
- (III) The secrecy of it: he may be exciting other against me, or sowing evil in myself.

2. The Deliverance Implored. “Hide me”.

- (I) Keep me from being tempted.
- (II) Keep me from evil when tempted.
- (III) Bring me out of it all unharmed.
- (IV) Meanwhile, let me be in Thy secret place.

3. The Consolation of Faith.

- (I) God does preserve praying ones.
- (II) Our enemy is *His* enemy.
- (III) He has preserved us already.
- (IV) We are His own.
- (V) His honour is involved.

Hints to the Village Preacher

Verse 3. “Who whet their tongues like a sword ...” To *whet*, means to *sharpen* as one would sharpen a razor on a leather strap, or a sword against the edge of a fine stone. Both things would be done by constant, reiterated movement and friction. So there are those who “whet their tongues” after the same fashion.

Verse 4. “That they may shoot in secret ...” The wicked are said to shoot their arrows “in secret,” and then, in verse 5, to say “Who shall see them?” Thus Satan lets fly a temptation so secretly, that he is

hardly suspected in the thing. Sometimes he uses a wife's tongue to do this errand, while at another he gets behind the back of a husband, or friend, or servant, and is not seen all the time he is doing his work. Who would have thought to have found a devil in Peter, tempting his Master, or suspected that Abraham should be his instrument to betray his beloved wife into the hands of a sin? Yet, so it was. Nay, sometimes he is so secret, that he borrows God's bow (the Bible) to shoot his arrows from, and the poor Christian is abused, thinking that it is God who chides and is angry, when it is the devil that tempts him to think so, and only counterfeits God's voice.

William Gurnall

Verse 7. “But God shall shoot at them with an arrow ...” The most mischievous weapons of the wicked are *words* - “even bitter words.” But, *The* Word is the chief weapon of the Holy Spirit; and, as with this weapon the great Captain of our Salvation foiled the tempter in the wilderness, so may we vanquish “the workers of iniquity” with the true Jerusalem blade.

J.L.K.

Verse 8. “So they shall make their own tongues to fall upon themselves ...” The arrows of idle words, though shot out of sight, and possibly quite forgotten, will hereafter drop down upon the heads of such as drew the bow. “Words are but wind,” is the common saying, but they are such wind as will either blow the soul to its haven of rest, or else sink it into the bottomless gulf of eternal misery.

Edward Rayner

Verse 10. “The righteous shall be glad in the Lord ... and *all* the upright in heart shall glory.” The psalm began in the first person singular, “Hear *My* voice, O God,” but it ends by comprehending “*All* the righteous.” He who is most anxious about his own salvation will be found to be the man of the truest and widest love to others; while he who talks most of unselfishness in religion is generally the most selfish ... the way to make all the upright rejoice is to be upright ourselves.

C. H. Spurgeon

Sayings *of the Countess of Warwick**

The “almost” Christian is the unhappiest of men; he has religion enough to make the world hate him, and yet, not enough to have God love him.

The Servants of God should be as bold for their Master, as the servants of the devil are for theirs.

He who *revenges* an injury acts the part of an executioner; he who *pardons* it, acts the part of a prince.

Sin brought death into the world, and nothing but death will carry sin out of it.

O Lord, I read that thou givest grace to the humble; so, Lord, give me grace to *be* humble.

Lord I know that what I give Thee will never please thee unless I give thee myself; and, Lord, all that Thou givest me shall never satisfy me, unless Thou givest me *Thyself*.

He loves God too little who loves anything *with* Him which he does not love *for* Him.

He who takes up Christ's cross aright, shall find it such a burden as wings to a bird, or sails to a ship.

As Christ was made vile *for* us to an endless degree, so He should be made precious *to* us by the same degree.

To be libelled for Christ is a medicine bright,
Where affliction is heavy, sin is light.

We should meditate on Christ's cross until we are fastened as close to Him He was to it.

* *Mary Rich (1625 to 1678) The Countess of Warwick*

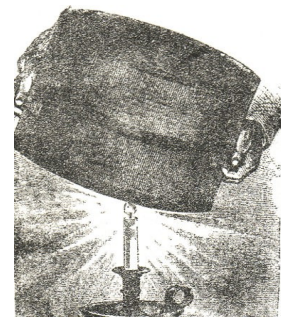


Sermons in Candles

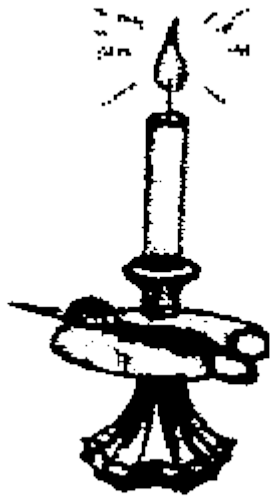
By C.H. Spurgeon
(part 5)



Let me set before you an admirable illustration, which is not one of my own, but comes from the great Master of assemblies. Here is a candle, and, of course we have brought it with a view to its giving light; but the absurd action that I am bent upon is to cover it up with a bushel. It would be a very ridiculous thing to be at the pains of providing a lighted candle and then to hide it under a bushel. Yet I do to make the folly apparent to you all. I notice that you laugh, and well you may. You may use a bushel and use a candle; but by putting the candle under the bushel, you use neither of them, but *mis-use* both. I am sure none of you would be guilty of such an absurd act.



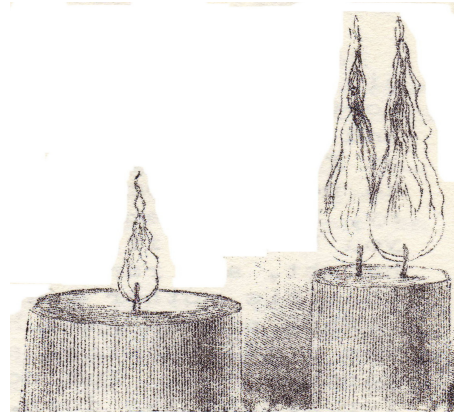
And can it be that even a single person here would be so profane as to believe that the *All*-wise God would do that which we all condemn as folly? And yet, when those of you who profess to have grace in your hearts claim that you are placed where you can do no good, you virtually charge the Lord with lighting a candle and putting it under a bushel. Yonder is my respected brother ... hear what he has to say; “My dear Mr. Spurgeon, you cannot expect me to be doing any work in the church, for my daily labour leaves me no time for anything else. I am willing, but quite unable to do a hand's turn for my Lord.” Yes, yes, I see ... God has lighted you, and then has put you where your light is condemned to be unseen. God has given you the light of His grace, and then deliberately placed a great golden bushel over you! Do you feel sure that is so? Is there not a still, small voice that whispers there is something wrong?



In the next similitude you have a simpler reminder of the imperfections to which men are liable. A candle needs *snuffers*. And men need chastisements; for they are both of them subject to infirmities. In the Temple of Solomon there were snuffers and snuff dishes; but *they were all of gold*. God's rebukes are in love, and so should our's be: holy rebukes in the spirit of love are snuffers of gold. Never use any others, and use even these with discretion, lest you put out the flame which it is your aim to improve.

Never reprove in anger. Do not deal with a small fault as if it were a great crime. If you see a fly on your boy's forehead, don't try to kill it with a sledge-hammer, or you may kill the boy also. Do the needful but very difficult work of reproof with the kindest and wisest style, so that the good that you aim at may be attained.

Here is a very important looking candle. You may expect great things from such a *portly* illuminator. Look at the size of it. But when I light it, the illuminating power is very small. We have here the maximum of tallow and the minimum of light. The fact is that only a little of the fat just near the centre ever gets melted. Partial consecration is a very doubtful thing; and yet, how much we have of it! What is needed is grace "more abundant" to fuse the whole man, and make every part and parcel of him subservient to God's great design of light-giving. I was present at a meeting where a truly solid and instructive speaker succeeded in mesmerising us all, so that in another half a minute we should all have been asleep. His talk was as good as gold, and as heavy. He was followed by a gentlemen who was "all there" - what there was of him. He was so energetic that he broke a chair, and made us all draw in our feet, for fear he should



come down on our corns. How the folks woke up! He was like the second candle in our woodcut – the cobbler's candle with *two wicks*. His blaze was very large in proportion to the material which sustained it.

Master Bunyan gives us a word of thought in the doggerel rhyme with which I end this lesson.

Man's like a candle in a candlestick,
Made up of tallow and a little wick;
And as the candle is, before 'tis lighted,
Just so be they who are in sin benighted.
Nor can a man with grace his soul inspire,
More than can candles set themselves on fire.
Candles receive their light from what they are not,
Men, grace from Him, for whom at first they care not.

Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

There was born in the town of Southampton over three-hundred years ago a little baby boy by the name of Isaac Watts. I'm sure if you were to look through the hymn book in your church you would find that name on nearly every page, because Isaac Watts was one of the greatest hymn-writers that ever lived.

When little Isaac Watts was born in the year 1674 the times were very hard for some preachers of the gospel known as Non-conformists. Little Isaac's father was a Non-conformist Minister, and he had been put in prison for preaching the gospel. Very often Isaac's mother would sit outside the prison wall nursing her little boy, and, perhaps, it was because young Isaac had such a hard time at the start of his life, that he was never very strong and was often sick.



In spite of this, however he was a cheery, bright little boy whom everybody loved, especially when he used to make up his funny little rhymes about things that he saw happening from day to day.

One day in school, he was caught laughing during the prayers. He was laughing, because he had noticed a big rat climbing down the bell-rope just behind the master's back. The master (who was his father and now out of the prison) called him to the front of the class, and was just about to give him the strap, when he decided to ask him why he had laughed. Little Isaac at once replied: -

“There was a rat, for want of stairs,
Came down a rope to go to prayers!”

And his father laughed, as well and let him off.

One other day, his father was going to punish him for making up so many silly rhymes, but Isaac said -

“Dear Father, do some pity take,
And I will no more verses make.”

And again he escaped from the strap.

However, boys and girls, as Isaac Watts grew older, his funny little rhymes gave way to many great hymns that were to become famous throughout the whole world. One of his greatest hymns, perhaps, is “When I survey the wondrous Cross.” The hymn about our Lord Jesus dying on the cross for our salvation. I wonder, can *you* sing these words and mean them?

Mrs. Seaton

From Genesis to Revelation

In ***Genesis*** the world was made by God's creative hand,
In ***Exodus*** the Hebrews marched to gain the promised land;
Leviticus contains the Law, holy and just and good,
Numbers records the tribes enrolled – all sons of Abraham's blood.

Moses in ***Deuteronomy*** recounts God's mighty deeds,
Brave ***Joshua*** unto Canaan's land the host of Israel leads;
In ***Judges*** their rebellion oft provokes the Lord to smite,
But ***Ruth*** records the faith of one well-pleasing in His sight.

In first and second ***Samuel*** of Jesse's son we read,
Ten tribes in first and second ***Kings*** revolted from his seed;
the first and second Chronicles see ***Judah*** captive led,
But ***Ezra*** leads a remnant back by princely Cyrus' aid.

The city walls of Zion ***Nehemiah*** builds again,
Whilst ***Esther*** saves her people from plots of wicked men;
In ***Job*** we read how faith will live beneath affliction's rod,
And all the ***Psalms*** are precious songs to every child of God.

The ***Proverbs*** like a goodly string of precious pearls appear,
Ecclesiastes teaches man how vain are all things here;
The mystic ***Song of Solomon*** exalts sweet Sharon's rose,
Whilst Christ the Saviour and the King the “rapt ***Isaiah***” shows.

The warning ***Jeremiah*** apostate Israel scorns,
His plaintive ***Lamentations*** its awful downfall mourns;
Ezekiel tells in wondrous words of dazzling mysteries,
Whilst glorious things of Christ the Lord ***Daniel*** in vision sees.

Of judgement and of mercy yet *Hosea* loves to tell,
Joel describes the blessed day when God with man would dwell;
Among Tekoa's husbandmen *Amos* received his call,
While Obadiah prophesied of *Edom's* final fall.

Jonah enshrines a wondrous type of Christ our Risen Lord,
Micah pronounces what the Lord requires of man restored;
Nahum declares that Nineveh the Lord shall overthrow,
A view of Chaldea's coming doom *Habakkuk's* verses show.

Next *Zephaniah* warns the Jews to turn and not be slain,
Haggai wrote of those who saw the Temple built again;
Zechariah prophesied of Christ the reigning Lord,
While *Malachi* was last to touch the high prophetic chord.

Matthew and *Mark* and *Luke* and *John* the Holy Gospels wrote,
Describing how the Saviour died, His life, and what He taught;
Acts proves how God was pleased to own His church in every place,
St. Paul in *Romans* teaches us how man is saved by grace.

The apostle in *Corinthians* instructs, exhorts, reproves,
Galatians shows that faith in Christ is what the Father loves;
Ephesians and *Philippians* tell Christians what to be,
Colossians bids us live to God and for eternity.

In *Thessalonians* we are taught the Lord will come from heaven,
In *Timothy* and *Titus* too, an Elder's rule is given;
Philemon marks a Christian's love, which only Christian's know,
Hebrews sets the gospel forth, prefigured in the Law.

James makes it clear that empty faith without our works is dead,
While *Peter* points the narrow way in which the saints are led;
In three epistles see how *John* on love delights to dwell,
And *Jude* gives awful warnings of judgment, wrath, and hell.

The ***Revelation*** prophesies of that tremendous day,
When Christ, and Christ alone, shall be the sinner's only stay;
When all mankind He separates and sets on either hand,
Dear reader, ask you heart just now -

“On which side will I stand?”

(Anonymous)



“The Bible is the water of life; the more you lave it forth, the fresher it runs. It is the fire of God's glory; the more you blow it the clearer it burns. It is the corn of the Lord's field; the better you grind it, the more it yields. It is the bread of heaven; the more it is broken and given out, the more remains. It is the sword of the Spirit; the more it is scoured, the brighter it shines.”

(Bishop Jewel)

