

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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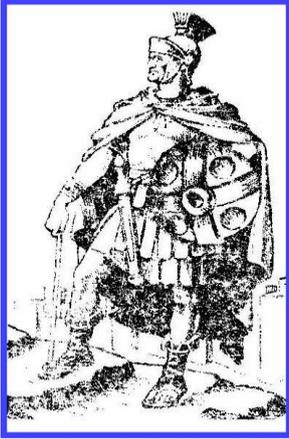
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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine www.wicketgate.co.uk you will also find the following recordings:

- Through the Bible with the Children – Bible Stories told by Mr Seaton.
- Congregational Praise – the singing of our Church during Worship Services
- Sermons preached by Dr N. Needham, W. J. Seaton and Pastor G. S. Marley
- Historical Lectures given in the Church by Dr Needham
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Archive of Audio Sermons.



***The Christian Armour:
Trusting in His Word for the Battle
"Put on the Whole Armour of God."
Ephesians 6:11***

Dear Friends,

When the apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might,” and to “put on the whole armour of God,” that they might be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil,” what he is exhorting them to, is to have a right attitude of heart and mind towards the Word of God. The “whole armour of God,” simply points to the whole Word of God for our lives. And nothing could be clearer than the fact that if ever we are going to engage in that part of our Christian lives known as the Christian warfare, then, we are only going to do it aright in so far as we are clad with this armour, and in so far as we have a right attitude of heart and mind towards it.

The first essential for our souls, then, is to have a total trust in this whole armour of God – in this whole Word of God. We can see what kind of a breakdown in morale would result if a modern army, or an ancient army for that matter, had no trust in the arms and the armaments with which it was issued for its warfare. The same is absolutely true for the Christian soldier in his conflict with the world, the flesh and the devil. If ever we needed anything today, it is a total trust in the whole of the

Word of God that God has given us for every aspect of our Christian warfare, whether we be on the defensive, or the offensive, as the case might be. We might learn from the example of young David, who would only put his trust in those weapons that he had tried and tested all his young life through. They were no doubt, scornful weapons in the eyes of others, but to him they were the very provision of the “Lord of Hosts” Himself, and as he went forth to fight his Goliath, he went forth with his heart and his mind totally settled, and trusting in their effectiveness to gain the day for him.

David in that conflict, of course, is but “one faint image” of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as David went forth as Israel’s representative that day to fight against Goliath of Gath for that people, so our Lord Jesus Christ was to go “down into the wilderness” to enter into combat with our Goliath, that old serpent the devil, on our behalf.

This He did:-

“For me, He was baptised, and bore
His holy fast, and hungered sore;
For me, the fierce temptation knew;
For me, the Tempter overthrew.”

What should ever stand as a lasting lesson for us is the *way* in which our Lord stood against “the wiles of the devil” at that time. It was by “putting on the whole armour of God.” Three times over He simply stated what God said in His word; “It is written;” that was His weapon, and He resorted to no other.

We are not to lose the ever-abiding significance of that. As the only begotten of the Father, He could have used any means at His sovereign disposal for repelling the devil’s attacks. As the

Omnipotent, Omniscient Son of God He could have chosen a whole array of armaments of which we know nothing. When He therefore chose the Holy Word of God alone to fight the devil He set an example and a pattern for us that we fail to follow at our peril. There is not only nothing more pathetic, but nothing more arrogant, than to see the professed churches of Christ today taking on to engage themselves in the Christian warfare with weapons other than those which Christ Himself used. May God drive it into all our hearts, that the *Living* Word Himself, chose only the *written* Word for all His battles and for all His conflicts with the adversary. God forbid that we should think ourselves more able, or wiser than He! As He trusted that armour, so may we.

Let it be said, of course, that the issue of trusting in the whole armour of God doesn't rest in trusting in the armour, in and of itself, but trusting in the God who gave the armour. It is this "whole armour *of God*." It is the armour that God supplies and prescribes for the warfare into which we are called once we become His children in grace. Therefore, when we place our trust in that Book which we call the Bible, it is not the Bible, in and of itself, that we are trusting in, but in God who gave the Bible for our use.

One of the great failings of many people today is to imagine that some of the saints of olden days were a bit limited in their thinking, and a bit naive in their outlook. So, it was easy for them to adopt some of the things that they did, in order to "do exploits." But it was not easy at all! Moses was an eighty year old man, who had spent forty years in the splendour of Egypt's court, and forty years in the solitude of Midian's desert: he knew that you don't cleave raging waves asunder with a glorified walking stick! It wasn't the rod he trusted in, it was his God

who told him to employ that rod for that purpose in his life. Gideon knew that you don't scatter enemies with "pitchers and lamps;" but he wasn't trusting in the pitchers and lamps, but in God who told him that those were his weapons of warfare.

Trace out the numerous incidents of that sort for yourself; they are legion; and what they do is, they set before us that great distinguishing mark between the carnal heart and the spiritual heart. The spiritual heart, or our hearts when they are spiritual will always bow to, and rejoice in, those things that God prescribes for us in our Christian warfare and pilgrimage. While the carnal heart, or our hearts when they are carnal, will always rebel against those things, and look for some weapon or arms more in keeping with the wisdom of man.

One of the great illustrations of that is found in Namaan the leper; that man who was directed from God as to how his leprosy was going to be taken away, by washing in the river Jordan, seven times. He was scandalized, and thought surely that the whole business would have been carried out in a spectacular manner. Most assuredly, Namaan refused the "means" he was too much a man of this world to trust in the likes of that for such a work in his life. But Namaan's real problem was not that he wouldn't trust the means, but that he wouldn't trust the God who prescribed the means. And when we fail to have our lives directed by God's Word – the Bible – it is not the Bible that we are failing to trust in, it is God who gave the Bible. Our problem is not simply that we have an inadequate attitude of heart and mind towards what is called "the armour," but towards what is called the armour "of God." The armour that God Himself employed, as the Son, when He fought with the devil on our behalf; the armour that God forever exhorts us to employ for all our works, and all our ways under Him.

Without one shadow of a doubt, that one who was chosen out to be the mother of our Lord, Mary, pronounced one of the most final words concerning His word for us. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee – when the servants are instructed to fill the water jars with water so that He might turn it in to wine; that was something that just wasn't done! You can't turn water into wine! But Mary's word sets the pattern for all time; "Whatsoever He saith unto thee to do, do it." And when God's word exhorts us to "put on the whole armour of God," it will be a good thing for our souls if we learn to do it, and respond to the exhortation, regardless of how the carnal side of our beings might rise up against it.

There is one final aspect of the exhortation not to be overlooked in our present age, and it is where the text says, "Put on the *whole* armour of God;" the *whole* armour of God.

We have a tremendous tendency to be "selective" in our reading and our understanding of God's Word. Sometimes we are quite prepared, and more than willing, to have on "the breastplate of righteousness," but we can be rather slow to go forth with our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We are not only to think in terms of the wholeness of God's words for our lives in its *totality*, but the wholeness of God's word for us in its *order and arrangement*. If we read further on in Ephesians chapter six, verses 14 to 17, we will see that the Roman soldier that Paul uses for his model, doesn't only put on his "whole armour," but puts it all on *in the right order*. The sin of the "liberals" and "modernists," is that they reject the wholeness of God's word in its totality; but we, in turn, who are called "evangelical," or, indeed, "reformed," must be careful that

we don't neglect the wholeness of God's word in its order, and unity, and arrangement for our lives. We need, not only armour for our lives, we need **God's armour**; and we need, not only the armour of God but "the **whole armour** of God." So runs the exhortation.

What is necessary, therefore, is a right attitude of heart and mind towards that whole armour, and that is why the passage begins, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Get your heart and mind "stayed upon Jehovah," and then, you will gladly "put on" this whole armour that He provides you with for all your way-faring life, and for all your war-faring life.

Yours sincerely,
W. J. Seaton.



***Mrs Seaton's Letter
to the
Boys and Girls***

Dear Boys and Girls,

By the time you receive this edition of the Wicket Gate, I'm sure some of you will have begun to **prepare** for Christmas. That's the word that I want you to think about.

Prepare. It means to get ready, and, I'm sure that as Christmas draws near you will have lots of things to prepare and get ready.

Presents for your mummies and daddies, and maybe for some of your friends. Cards that you are going to send, and, for some of the girls anyway, dresses that you are going to wear at

your parties. Perhaps, even, some of you will be preparing to “welcome home” a brother or a sister who has been away from home working or studying in some other town or city, or country even.

Many, many years ago, around the time that we now call Christmas, some men and women had begun to *prepare* for a special event, as well. It was the day when our Lord Jesus Christ was born into this world as a baby in Bethlehem’s manger to become the Saviour of men and women, and boys and girls. These people – the shepherds, the Wise Men, Joseph, Mary, Simeon, and many others – had begun to *prepare* because they had read their Bibles and they knew that Jesus was, indeed going to be born at the time when God had said.

How happy they were when Jesus came and they were *prepared* to welcome Him. Many others, of course, were not *prepared* to welcome Jesus. Oh, they may have heard that He was to come and be born the King of Kings, but they just didn’t believe it. And so, of course they didn’t *prepare* themselves for His coming.

Now, the Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is *coming again*. What does that mean? you say. Well, it means that just as Jesus came once to this world, so He is going to come again to this world. He won’t come as a babe this time, but He will come as the ruler of all the earth. And, says the Bible, when He does come again, there will be some who will be *prepared* to meet Him, but there will be others who will not be *prepared*.

As you *prepare* for Christmas, remember how important it is to *prepare* for that day when Jesus will come again.

Mrs Seaton.



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 105 (Concluded)

The presence of God having remained with His chosen people while they sojourned in Canaan, it did not desert them when they were called to go down into Egypt. They did not go there of their own choice, but under divine direction, and hence the Lord prepared their way and prospered them until He saw fit to conduct them again to the land of promise.

C.H.S.

Verse 16. “Moreover he called for a famine upon the land; he brake the whole staff of bread.” God called for the famine in the land of Canaan in the days of Jacob, just as a master calls for a servant ready to do his bidding. On the contrary, God says in Ezekiel, “I will *call* for the corn, and will increase it.” The Centurion with the sick servant realised the same power in Christ:- that just as he could summons or dismiss those under him, so this Christ had the same authority over sickness and disease itself. His voice both “commands the tempest forth, and stills the stormy wave.”

Verses 17-22. “He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant.” In many circumstances concerning Joseph:- in his being beloved of his father - in his being hated of his brethren - in his sufferings and deep abasement - in his being brought out of prison – in his advancement and exaltation – in his wisdom and prudence – in his providing for his father’s family – in his free forgiveness of the injuries received from his

brothers – it may be truly said, we have Christ described therein, and set forth thereby, in type, figure, and representatively.

Samuel Eyles Pierce

Verse 23. “Israel came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.” The aged patriarch came, and with him that increasing company that bore his name. He was hard to bring there. Perhaps nothing short of the hope of seeing Joseph could have drawn him to take so long a journey from the tombs of his forefathers. But the divine will was accomplished and the church of God was removed into an enemy’s country, where for a while it was nourished. God so willed it for a time. and therefore it was safe and right; still it was only a sojourn, not a settlement. The fairest Goshen in Egypt was not the covenant blessing, neither did the Lord mean His people to think it so. Even so to us, “earth is our lodge,” but only our lodge; heaven is our home. When we are *best* housed on this earth we ought still to remember that here we have no continuing city. It were ill indeed for us if we were doomed to reside in “Egypt” for ever.

Spurgeon

Verse 28. “He sent darkness, and made it dark ...” Now begins the account of the plagues by which God displayed His might and delivered Israel out of Egypt: the water into blood, the frogs, the lice, and flies, the hail, the locusts etc. – right until the death of the firstborn. As A. R. Fausset remarks. “The darkness here stands at the beginning of the plagues; (not in the historical order in which it occurred,) but this is to mark how God’s wrath hung over Egypt like a dark cloud during all the plagues.”

God did not bring the same plague twice, but when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one. God has many arrows in His quiver.

Verse 37. “He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.”

When Israel came out of Egypt “there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” *So* – there shall be no feeble saint go to heaven, for they shall be perfect when transported there by the angels of God, although they complain of much feebleness here. At the instant of death the least saint *shoots* to such a perfect knowledge of God, and such a measure of grace, as is not possible here.

From John Sheffield (1654.)

Verse 39. “He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.” From this verse until verse 44 the psalmist sings of God’s Mighty Acts in bringing the people through the wilderness and into Canaan at last. “He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock and the water gushed out ... he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant ... He brought forth his people with joy ...” So the psalmist concludes:- **“Praise ye the Lord.”** And as the Lord’s people today we may read those Acts and echo, “Amen!”

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.”

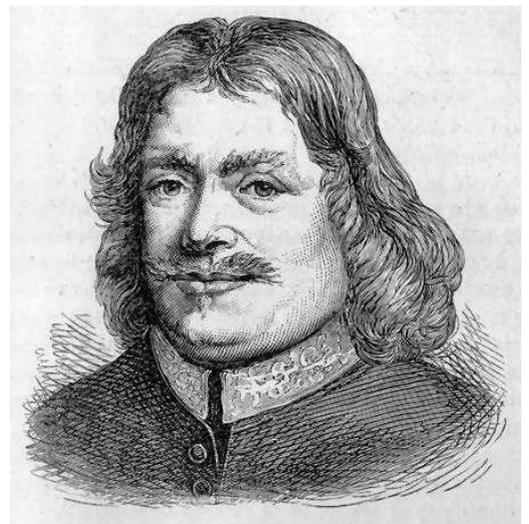
(John Bunyan)

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 signalled 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."



Thoughts from Martin Luther

“If I thoroughly appreciated those first words of the Lord’s prayer – ‘Our Father, which art in heaven’ – and really believed that God, who made heaven and earth and all creatures, was really my Father, then I should certainly conclude that I also am a lord of heaven and earth; that Christ is my brother, Gabriel my servant, and all the angels my attendants, given unto me by my heavenly Father, to keep me in His ways, lest I knock my foot against a stone.”

“When Abraham shall rise again in the last day, then he will chide us for our unbelief, and will say – I had not the hundredth part of the promises that ye have, and yet I believed. That example of Abraham’s exceeds all natural human reason, who, overcoming the paternal love he bore towards his only son Isaac, was all obedient to God, and, against the law of nature, would have sacrificed that son. What, for the space of those three days, he felt in his heart; what hesitations and trials he had, cannot be expressed.”

Thoughts from Thomas Adams and John Calvin

Ears to Hear.

“The eye as a mere organ of sense must give place to the ear. Therefore it is wittily observed that, our Saviour, in commanding the amputation of the offending ‘hand,’ ‘foot,’ or ‘eye,’ In Mark chapter 11, never spoke of the ear! If thy hand, or thy foot, or thine eye offend thee, deprive thyself of them; but part not with thine ear, for that is the organ to use unto thy soul’s salvation. The Jews had eyes to see Christ’s miracles, but because they had no ears to hear His wisdom, therefore they had no feet to enter His kingdom. The way into the house is by the door, not by the window; the eye is but the window of the heart, the ear is the door. Christ now stands knocking at the door, not at the window, and He will not come in at the window, but at the door. ‘He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.’ Christ now comes by His oracles, not by His miracles; the way to open and let Him in is by the door – to hear His voice. Open your ears, therefore, to His heavenly voice.”

Thomas Adams

Hearts to Understand.

“Because we do not know who belongs, or does not belong, to the number of the predestinated, it becomes us to desire the salvation of all. Thus, whoever we meet, we shall endeavour to make him a partaker of peace; but our peace shall rest upon the sons of peace.”

