

# The Wicket Gate Magazine

## A Continuing Witness



Internet Edition 168 issued July 2024

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At the Web Site of the Wicket Gate magazine [www.wicketgate.co.uk](http://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 and W. J. Seaton
- Podcasts on Various Subjects
- Archive of Audio Sermons.

# *Calvin's Prayers*

*Edited by W. J. Seaton (1983)*

It was the practice of John Calvin to preach systematically and expositionally through the various books of the Bible while he was at Geneva. Those expositions and comments are truly, what Mr Spurgeon said, “worth their weight in gold.” Of equal “metallic value,” spiritually speaking, are the *prayers* with which Calvin concluded and summed up each day’s message on a particular portion of scripture. A few examples from his consecutive preaching through the Book of Daniel will bear this out.

After his first sermon, dealing with the general message of the Book of Daniel and our place as the Lord’s people in this world, where we are to endeavour to be faithful to God under His eternal providences and purposes, he prays in these words:

“Grant, Almighty God, since thou settest before us so clear a mirror of thy wonderful providence and thy judgements on thine ancient people, that we may also be surely persuaded of our being under thy hand and protection. Grant, that relying on thee, we may hope for thy guardianship, whatever may happen, since thou never lovest sight of our safety, so that we may invoke thee with a secure and tranquil mind. May we so fearlessly wait for all dangers amidst all the changes of this world, so that we may stand upon the foundation of thy Word, which can never fail, and leaning on thy promises, may we repose on Christ, to whom thou hast committed us and whom thou hast made the Shepherd of all thy flock. Grant that he may be so careful of us to lead us through this course of warfare, however troublesome and turbulent it may prove, until we arrive at that heavenly rest which he has purchased for us by His own blood. Amen.”

After he has preached on how Daniel and his three friends stood up to the first “temptation” and issue that faced them in the strange land of Babylon, and where Daniel had been given favour in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs by God, so that they were able to escape the snare, he prays like this:

“Grant, Almighty God, since we are now compassed by so many enemies, and the devil does not cease to harass us with fresh snares, so that the whole world is hostile to us, that we may perceive even the devil himself to be restrained by thy bridle.

Grant also that all the impious may be subjected to thee, that thou mayest lead them whithersoever thou wishest. Do thou direct their hearts, and may we be experimentally taught how safe and secure we are under the protection of thy hand. And may we proceed, according to thy promise, in the course of our calling, until at length we arrive at that blessed rest, which is laid up for us in heaven, by Christ our Lord. Amen.”

In the last few verses of chapter one of Daniel, we are informed of the wisdom, and gifts and abilities, that God gave Daniel and the others; while at the beginning of chapter two, we are shown the failure of human reasoning without God. Calvin concludes that passage with this prayer:

“Grant, Almighty God, that since every perfect gift comes from thee, and since some excel others in intelligence and talents, yet as no one has anything of his own, but as thou deignest to distribute to man a measure of thy gracious liberality, grant that whatever intelligence thou dost confer upon us, we may apply it to the glory of thy Name.

Grant also, that we may acknowledge in humility and modesty what thou has committed to our care to be thine own; and may we study to be restrained by sobriety, to

desire nothing superfluous, never to corrupt true and genuine knowledge, and to remain in that simplicity to which thou callest us.

Finally, may we not rest in these earthly things but learn rather to raise our minds to true wisdom, to acknowledge thee to be the true God, and to devote ourselves to the obedience of thy righteousness; and may it be our sole object to devote and consecrate ourselves entirely to the glory of thy Name throughout our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The first great task that confronted Daniel in the land of Babylon was the discerning of the secret and the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and with that task before them, the four Hebrew youths sought the Lord’s face for guidance and revelation. They were not to be disappointed, seeing that they will seek in the right way; Calvin anticipates that at the close of his Fifth Sermon:

“Grant, Almighty God, since during our pilgrimage in this world, we have daily need of the teaching and government of thy Spirit, that with true modesty we may depend on thy word and secret inspiration, and not take too much on ourselves. Grant, also, that we may be conscious of our ignorance, blindness, and stupidity, and always flee to thee, and never permit ourselves to be drawn aside in any way by the cunning of Satan and the ungodly. May we remain so fixed in thy truth as never to turn aside from it, whilst thou dost direct us through the whole course of our vocation, and then may we arrive at that heavenly glory which has been obtained for us through the blood of thine only begotten Son. Amen.

And so right through to the end of the Commentary. Sixty-six sermons in all in that book of Daniel that speaks so much to our souls about our place and our calling in this world of ours as the faithful people of God, until God shall end our “captivity” and take us out of

the “strange land” of this world to worship Him at His Temple day and night. So, the last verse of Daniel – “But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days;” and so Calvin’s last and final prayer in the book:

“Grant, Almighty God, since thou proposest to us no other end than that of constant warfare during our whole life, and subjectest us to many cares until we arrive at the goal of this temporary racecourse: Grant, I pray thee, that we may never grow fatigued. May we ever be armed and equipped for battle, and whatever the trials by which thou dost prove us, may we never be found deficient. May we always aspire towards heaven with upright souls, and strive with all our endeavours to attain that blessed rest, which is laid up for us in heaven, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

*Praise be to God.*



## ***Gleanings in the Psalms***

### ***Psalm 101***

If we call this *David’s Psalm of Pious Resolutions*, we shall perhaps remember it all the more readily. After the song of praise (the 100<sup>th</sup>) a psalm of practice not only makes variety, but comes in most fittingly. We never praise the Lord better than when we do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

*Spurgeon*

**Verse 1. “I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.”** The manner of expression bespeaks a *humble* resolution; I cannot sing of merit, but I will sing of mercy. To sing of mercy must be a humble song, for mercy towards a miserable sinner is a melting word; and to sing of

“judgment” also must be a humble song, for *judgement* in every sense is an *awful* word. David knew what the subject of his song should be, and, he says, “I will sing of mercy and judgment.” And he knew who should be the *object* of his song, therefore, he says, “To thee, O Lord, will I sing.” He knew who should be the singer and, therefore, he says, “*I* will do it; and he knew what manner of expression was needed, therefore, he says, I will *sing* of mercy and judgment: to thee, O Lord, will I *sing*.”

*From Ralph Erskine.*

**Verse 1. “I will sing of mercy and judgment.”** It has been said, “We are accustomed to write our mercies in the sand, and our calamities in the rock.” We should do just the reverse.

*Anon.*

**Verse 2. “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way ... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”** It is easier for most men to walk within the *church* or even in the *world*, with a perfect heart, than in their own families. How many are as meek as lambs among *others*, when at home they are wasps or tigers.

*Adam Clarke*

Can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad and leaves none for his nearest relations at home?

*William Gurnall*

**Verse 3. “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside ...”** Having mentioned “them that turn aside” to evil, in general, David then enters into some particular cases: but when he does so, he does not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers, or blasphemers, but he mentions those whose sins were scandalous, but no less dangerous. He will have nothing to do:

(1).

With spiteful malicious people, who are ill-natured, and who will bear a grudge a long time, and not care what mischief they do to those against whom they have their pique. Verse 4 – “A forward heart shall depart from me.”

(2).

With slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour’s reputation secretly; verse 5 – “whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off.”

(3). With haughty, conceited, ambitious people. None do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for “only by pride cometh contention.” Therefore – verse 5 – “Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

(4). With false deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds; verse 7 – “He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.”

Herein David was a man after God’s own heart; for a proud look and a lying tongue are things that God hates.

*Matthew Henry*

**And so** – this Psalm is full of stern exclusiveness and of noble intolerance; not against theological error – not against uncourtly manners – not against political insubordination; but against the proud heart – the high look – the secret slanderer – the deceitful worker – the teller of lies. These are the “outlaws” from King David’s court; these are the “rebels” and “heretics” whom he would not suffer to dwell in his house, or tarry in his sight.

*Arthur Stanley*

“Against such heretics and foes,  
O Lord, will I contend;

And of such rebels in my heart,  
Grant me to make an end.”

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



Dear Boys and Girls,

Sarah lived in a little village surrounded by woods. She hadn't many friends to play with, but this didn't worry her, as she loved to wander into the woods beside her home. In the spring and summer days she used to gather posies of flowers for her mother and her neighbours. She would have such fun deciding which colours of flowers and which kinds of grasses to blend together.

How happy she was among the trees and flowers, but gradually it became more and more difficult to find flowers to make really colourful posies. Sadly, she asked her mother, "Mummy, why does God allow so many flowers to wither, and fade, and die?" Her mummy looked at her, and quietly said, "Sarah, come with me, and we will take a walk into the woods." So, Sarah and mummy got well wrapped up with coats and hoods, for the days were getting colder, and off they went into the woods.

As they walked along, mummy began to point out things that Sarah had never noticed before – on the wild rose bushes, where there had been such lovely flowers, there were now shiny red bulbs and on other little plants, little black, or green, seeds; even the ferns and grasses had little seeds, too. Then mummy explained that soon these little seeds would fall off and bury themselves in the ground, where they would lie until spring-time had come. Once spring would come, then Sarah would be able to see little plants sprouting up through the ground where the seeds had fallen.



“Even from one seed, Sarah,” said mummy, “you will be able to gather many flowers.” Sarah wasn’t sad any more, and she looked forward to the spring-time. “How loving and wise God is with the world He has made,” she said to her mother. “Yes,” replied her mummy, “but, you see, Sarah, what I have told you today about the seeds falling into the ground and dying, must remind us of what Jesus meant when He said, ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’ He was speaking about His own death, of course. He would die, and how sad that seems; but, the Bible says, because He died and rose again, then all those who believe in Him as their own Saviour will live for evermore with Him in heaven.”

Love,  
Mrs Seaton.

## ***Thoughts from A. W. Tozer***

***Light without Sight.*** To find the way, we need more than light; we also need sight! The Holy Scriptures are the source of moral and spiritual light, yet I consider that I cast no aspersion upon the hallowed page when I say that its radiance is not by itself enough. Light alone is not sufficient. The coming of knowledge is like the rising of the sun. But sunrise means nothing to the unseeing eye. Only the sighted benefit from the light of the sun. Between light and sight, there is a wide difference.

We have said this much to point out that religious instruction, however sound, is not enough by itself. It brings light, but it cannot impart sight. The text without the Spirit’s enlightenment cannot save the sinner. Salvation follows a work of the Spirit in the heart. There can be no salvation apart from the truth, but there can be, and often is, truth without salvation.

How many multiplied thousands have learned the catechism by heart and still wander in moral darkness because there has been no inward illumination! The Pharisees looked straight at the Light of the world for three years, but not one ray of light reached their inner beings. Light is not enough!

***Fruit Without Root.*** One marked difference between the faith of our fathers as conceived by the fathers, and the same faith as understood and lived by their children, is that the fathers were concerned with the root of the matter, while their present-day descendants seem concerned only with the fruit.

Today we write biographies of the Augustines, the Luthers, and the Wesleys and celebrate their fruit, but the tendency is to ignore the root out of which the fruit sprang. Our fathers looked well to the root of the tree, and were willing to wait with patience for the fruit to appear. We demand the fruit immediately, even though the root may be weak and knobby, or missing altogether.

How can we ignore even the “natural” fact that the bough that breaks off from the tree in a storm may bloom briefly, giving the impression that it is a healthy and fruitful branch, but its tender blossoms will soon perish, and the bough itself will soon wither and die? There is no lasting life apart from the root.

Much that passes for Christianity today is the brief, bright effort of the severed branch to bring forth its fruit in its season. But the deep laws of life are against it. Preoccupation with appearances and a corresponding neglect of the out-of-sight root of the true spiritual life are prophetic signs that go unheeded.



***Faith Without Failing.*** This we must remember: faith is not a noble quality found only in superior men. It is not a virtue attainable only by a limited few. It is not the quality to persuade ourselves that black is white, or that something we desire will come to pass if we only wish hard enough. Faith is simply the bringing of our minds into accord with the truth. It is adjusting our expectations to the promises of God in complete assurance that the God of the whole earth cannot lie.

As long as we question the wisdom of any of God's ways, our faith is still tentative and uncertain. Faith enters when there is no supporting evidence to corroborate God's word of promise, and we must put our confidence blindly in the character of the One who made the promise.

A man looks at a mountain and affirms, "That is a mountain." There is no particular virtue in the affirmation. It is simply accepting the fact that stands before him, and bringing his belief into accord with the fact. The man does not create the mountain by believing, nor could he annihilate it by denying.

And so, with the truth of God. The believing man accepts a promise of God as a fact as solid as a mountain, and vastly more enduring. His faith changes nothing except his own personal relation to the word of promise. God's Word is true, whether we believe it or not. Human unbelief cannot alter the character of God.

***"Christianity" Without Christ.*** As believers, we should be warned that any appeal to men and women in the name of Christ that rises no higher than an invitation to a tranquil life must be recognised as mere humanism with a few words of Jesus thrown in to make it

appear Christian. Strange, is it not, that we dare to alter and modulate the words of Christ while professing to speak for Christ to men and women in the gospel!



## *More Flowers from a Puritan's Garden*

*Thomas Manton  
and  
Charles Spurgeon*

This is part two of the thoughts of Spurgeon based on Thomas Manton's thoughts on the 119<sup>th</sup> psalm.

### **Manton:**

We do not judge of men's complexions by the colour they have when they sit before the fire.

### **Spurgeon:**

See how people weep under a moving sermon! Think not, therefore, that their hearts are changed, for even marble drips in certain weathers. A man fresh from a revival meeting may look like a zealous Christian; but see him when he goes to conduct his business at market. As a face rendered red by the fire soon loses all its ruddiness, so do numbers lose all their "godliness" when they quit the society of the godly.

### **Manton:**

We should as carefully avoid *errors* as vices; a blind eye is worse than a lame foot; yea, a blind eye may cause a lame foot, for he that has not light is apt to stumble.

**Spurgeon:**

Very few seem to think so, but there is solemn truth in the statement. Men fancy that their minds are their own, and that they may do what they will with them – thinking and believing just as their conceit suggests with consequences. But doctrinal laxity leads to moral licence. Falsehoods of belief are fitly followed by superstitions in ritual, for those who slay the doctrines are not ashamed to mangle the ordinances. O, Lord ... Do not allow me to be blind to thy truth, lest I stumble in my daily life, and become scandalous as well as heretical.

**Manton:**

A gardener knoweth what roots are in the ground long before they appear.

**Spurgeon:**

Look over the garden in winter, and you will not know that there is any preparation for spring; but the gardener sees in his mind's eye – here a circle of golden cups, and there a cluster of snow-white beauties. His eye knows where the daffodils and the anemones lie asleep, waiting to rise in all their loveliness; and he has learned the secret of the primroses and the violets, who wait in ambush till the first warm breath of spring shall bid them reveal themselves. Even thus the Lord knows his hidden ones long before the day of their manifesting. He sees his church before its ministers see it, and declares concerning heathen Corinth, "I have much people in this city."

**Manton:**

When a sentinel is set upon watch, he must not come off without the commander's leave, and till he is discharged by authority.

**Spurgeon:**

The instance of the sentinel in Pompeii, whose skeleton was found erect at the city gate, when all but he had fled, need not be repeated in words; but it should be copied by each one of us in his life. If the earth should reel, it is the Christian's to keep his place.

If set to preach the gospel, let us maintain the truth, though philosophy should thin the number of our comrades till we remain alone. If commanded to teach a few little children, let us be as faithful to our trust as if we had been set to lead a legion of angels. “Whatsoever he saith unto thee, do it,” was Mary’s advice in her day, and the spirit of that should abide with all Christians to the end of time.

## ***A Living Epistle***

### ***Rev. John Milne of Perth.***

“The Rev. John Milne, of Perth, was in some respects a remarkable man, and was much beloved by all who knew him. He was earnest and open-hearted, and ever had a word to utter for the Master. He never refused invitations to preach for his neighbours. He never missed an opportunity of trying to do good. If travelling in a railway carriage, he would engage the passengers in religious conversation. If he hired a cab, he would speak to the cabman about being ‘saved.’ If he saw a poor woman carrying a basket, he would offer to help her, saying ‘that we ought to bear one another’s burdens.’ If a man begged from him, he would give a coin, and tell him to ‘beg for his soul.’ To fishermen mending their nets, he would say that he too was a fisherman, and he wished to catch men. To stone-breakers he would say that he was a stone-breaker, trying to break stoney hearts. He would tell boys selling newspapers that he had a newspaper that never grew old, meaning the Bible. When he saw anyone in mourning, he would go up to them, speak of their bereavement, say that he sympathised with them, and so did Christ.

When the Queen came to Perth to uncover a statue of Prince Albert, Mr Milne was anxious that she should receive some spiritual benefit at his hands. He wished to present her with a copy of a favourite hymn. He found no opportunity of doing it

personally, but Lord Mansfield introduced him to a gentleman who assured him that the hymn would be presented to the Queen.

Many a time, now more than twenty years ago, did Mr Milne stop the writer of this book on Perth Bridge, or by the river side; he would look at his bundle of books, and ask how he was getting on with his studies in Virgil or Homer. Then would follow an invitation to his Bible-class. His manner was so simple, his character so transparent, that as soon as he spoke it was evident that he had but one object in view, and that was to lead the soul to the living Lord, that it there might enjoy rest, pardon, and peace.”

(From the Religious Anecdotes of Scotland by William Adamson.)