

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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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.

A Call to Holiness.

"Be ye holy for I am holy."

Dear Friends,

The question of ***holiness*** is one that very often confronts us in the Christian life. Am I holy? Is my behaviour holy? Is the course that I am endeavouring to follow in the Christian life a holy course? The question presents itself in many ways, and normally finds a variety of answers and solutions. Some of these are valid, some are inadequate, some are downright erroneous. Very often we search for a definition of holiness that belongs to another era, and we look for our examples of holiness in the behaviour of some of the saints of that time and age.

This can be very profitable to us, of course, but it can also be very debilitating spiritually, for ***their*** age was not our age, and ***our*** age is not their age. Every definition or example of holiness must be determined by the Word of God alone, for the Word of God alone is timeless to the Lord's people, and it alone must provide our guidelines for holiness in whatever generation or age we find ourselves.

Biblically speaking, then, it would be fair to say that holiness as far as we are concerned in our lives, is our conformity to God in His person and in His behaviour. God is ***all*** holy; He is "an holy God:" and His exhortation to us is, "Be ye holy for I am holy." There is, therefore, only one way that we can ever be holy, or considered holy, and that is by conforming to Him. By endeavouring to behave like Him, and think like Him, and act like Him. All of those things, of course, are to be contained within the limitations and the inabilities of our fallen human nature, even though redeemed. But to be holy is to be like God, for God alone is holy, and perfectly holy.

Once we settle what holiness is, then, it becomes obvious that what we very much need in our pursuit of holiness is an example. God is "in the heavens," as the Bible says; God "dwells in light inaccessible." Therefore, how can I know how God acts in holiness or speaks in

holiness, or behaves in holiness? And the answer to that question, of course, brings us right to the heart of the gospel, that in our Lord Jesus Christ, we are not only given One who is “made unto us, holiness,” but we are given One who is meant to show unto us holiness, as well. We may call to mind Paul’s great statement, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us;” so that the Lord Himself could tell Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Our Lord Jesus Christ was “God manifest in the flesh” when He lived for that period of time in this world of ours; and as God is holy, therefore, everything that Christ said and did as God manifest in the flesh in this world was holy. Christ is our example for holiness, and the One, perfect, infallible example of holiness for us, in whatever age we live, or in whichever generation we find ourselves.

Another question arises, of course, namely – how then did Christ act, and behave, and think, and speak when He was in this world? And that is a massive question.

There are many people who form some kind of a view of our Lord’s behaviour in this world that totally fails to take into account the “wholeness” of what the New Testament tells us about Him. There are some features that dominate, no doubt; but there are various aspects of our Lord’s ministry that appear to be “poles apart” when we simply look at the action or the words involved. The same Lord who opens up His arms to declare, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” is the same Lord who pronounces His “woes” on the Scribes and Pharisees. The same Lord who cast a devil out of a poor demoniac, was the same Lord who cast the moneychangers out of the Temple. The same Lord who could speak in words of “glowing kindness,” was the same Lord who could speak in words of burning condemnation.

In a word, then, when we speak about Christ as our example and the One whom we are to imitate in our endeavours to be holy as He is holy, it isn’t just the individual acts or words that we are to think in terms of, but that which determined His acts and His words in all of those various circumstances that He found himself in; and that was the

Word of God, the Scriptures. Any real reading of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world of ours will reveal one great overriding fact – that He was absolutely under what God said, and what God pronounced.

The great “covering word” for His mission in this world is, “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God.” “The words that I speak, they are not mine own words, but the words of him that sent me;” “the works that I do, they are not mine own works, but the works of him who sent me.” Every individual act or word of the Saviour in this world was the product of that which characterised Him in this world – and that was His total commitment to what “the Bible” said, to what His Father said, to what the truth declared.

Therefore, if it is God alone who is perfectly holy, and if it is Christ alone who occupied the position of “God manifest in the flesh,” and if the great characteristic of Christ was obedience to God’s word, then to be “biblically” holy is to be obedient to God’s word, and to be obedient to God’s word is to be “biblically” holy. To follow the footsteps of Christ in this world is to follow One who always set His foot in the direction of the word of a holy God; and if we would be holy as He is holy, we must endeavour to do likewise. It is impossible to be holy apart from adherence to the written word of God for us. It is not “feelings;” it is obedience to the truth that marks us out like Christ, for that is precisely what marked Him out in this world, from beginning to end.

We might bear in mind that in the very first piece of scripture that relates any activity on the part of our Lord in this world, it is an activity of bowing to the Word of the Living God. When He had gone up to Jerusalem as a twelve-year-old-boy and had entered into discussion with the “doctors,” etc., and then had returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph again, where “He was subject unto them,” we’re told. When our Lord as a boy made Himself subject to Mary and Joseph He was, of course, fulfilling all the Law for us – and that Law which said, “Honour thy father and thy mother.” It was God who had written that law, and

even in His boyhood, our Lord Jesus bowed to the written word in the holy life that He had come to live.

In the next major appearance of His life, when He came from Nazareth and was baptised by John, and was then taken up into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, He is again being shown as absolutely committed to God's written truth. When the devil assails Him three times over, our Lord employs but one weapon, three times over, "It is written ... It is written ... It is written." There is no more challenging piece of scripture than that with regards to how we ought to endeavour to live. He was the living Word; He could have employed any weapon, or produced any means for that encounter with Satan; but He chose only the written Word. The Living Word – "full of the Holy Ghost," "led by the Holy Spirit," – employed only the Spirit's Word. Surely a lesson for any who claim to be "filled with the Spirit" in our day, and a touchstone for any of us in the business of holiness in our lives.

As with that supernatural foe, so with those of the human variety, as well. Time after time, we find our Lord meeting those who would oppose Him with the searching words – "What is written?" "How readest thou?" "What saith the scriptures?" God has given us His Holy Word, and in the business of holiness it is that Word that is determinative and final. It was so for His Holy Son; it certainly must be so for us in our day and generation. Our Saviour lived *by* it, and when He came to die, He died *on* it.

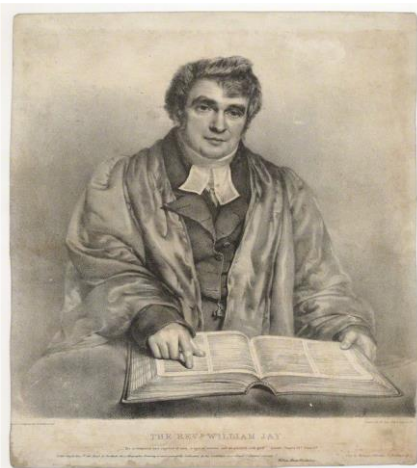
We may remember that our Lord's very last words on the cross were words from the 31st psalm – "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The scriptures of God that had been his directive and delight in His life on earth, became His comfort and stay once He came to leave the earth. If ever we would be holy, it will be by emulating the holy Son of God in His total adherence to the holy scriptures.

When the apostle exhorts us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us," that besetting sin that he is speaking about there is the sin of unbelief. Each of us has a peculiar "weight" that hinders us in the Christian race; all of us are impeded by the sin of

unbelief, to one degree or another. The “antidote” that the apostle gives in that famous Hebrew passage is to “look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross,” and so forth. As Christ ran His course in this world under His Father, He did so always in the light of what His Father had said in His word. If ever we will run our race in a “holy” fashion, it will be in exactly the same way.

God is holy; Christ is God; and as God manifest in the flesh in this world, He lived in this world always in accordance and harmony with the Scriptures of a holy God. That is our pattern, and He is our example, for this age, and for every age in which the Church finds itself. We may be thankful for every example of holiness that is given to us in the life of the Church of another age; but we must remember that every *true* example of holiness is that which is an expression of obedience to God’s truth. May we obey that truth in our day, and so be “biblically” holy in our day, to the praise of God.

Yours Sincerely,
W. J. Seaton (February 1983)



Take Heed How Ye Hear.

By

William Jay

The Lord Jesus demands a practical outworking of his word: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,” – “I have delivered many things in your presence, and ye have done well in hearing them. But my preaching is not to be viewed as an entertainment. My doctrine is not designed to amuse the mind, to gratify curiosity, to furnish a number of lifeless

speculations. Hearing is only instrumental to something else; there is a duty of greater importance still remaining.” What is it, my brethren? What does our Saviour say in other parts of His word to explain His command? “Mix faith with hearing,” He says, “let not the sense leave the mind as soon as the sound leaves the ear - remember it – enliven it by meditation – reduce it into feelings and actions – fear these denunciations – embrace these promises – walk according to this rule.”

It is a lamentable reflection, that all the concern many of our hearers have with sermons consists in hearing them. They do not consider hearing as the means of becoming religious – it is their religion. They conclude that their duty is over when the discourse is ended, whereas it has just begun. Instead of carrying off portions of divine wisdom to illuminate their lives, they leave behind them all the instruction they have received.

But the Word of God is practical; every truth is announced to accomplish some purpose. If it reveals a refuge, it is that you may enter in and be safe. If it proclaims a remedy, it is that you may use it. It is not your hearing it, but your applying it that will save you from death. You say of a preacher, he ought to *do* as well as *preach*; and we say of a hearer, he ought to *do* as well as *hear*. You say – and you say truly – that mere preaching will not save us; and we say – with equal truth – mere hearing will not save you. And can you imagine that the design of the blessed God in giving you His glorious gospel from Sabbath to Sabbath is acknowledged if, after all the sermons you have heard and even applauded after twenty or forty years, you are found as malignant, as covetous, as full of the world as before? Or if your profiting appears only in some dead notions, very well laid out in your mind, or in a capacity to weigh preachers in the nicest scales of orthodoxy, or in the “useful” employment of splitting hairs, or tying and untying knots? What! does the gospel of your salvation only make you a trifler?

To persons concerned for the honour of the gospel and the salvation of mankind, the Christian world presents an affecting prospect. Where is the preacher who doesn't close his Sabbaths imbittered by the review of unprofitableness? You invite us to your tables – you crowd us in our

temples; but you impel us to retire from both complaining, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” We condemn your practice! You thank us for our good sermons, and proceed as before. Your approval does not hinder your sinning, nor your sinning your approval. Where are the evidences of our success? Are they to be heard in the enquiry, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Are they to be seen in your deadness to the world – in your self-denying – in your taking up the cross- in your heavenly-mindedness – in serving your generation according to the will of God – in being examples to others?

How shall I impress you with the importance of this, or by what motives can I enforce upon you this practical attention to the gospel you hear? Shall I remind you of the precarious tenure of your privileges, and say, with our Saviour, “Yet a little while the light is with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness came upon you?” There are no calls of mercy beyond the grave, and “What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” The Jews had distinguished privileges; but “The kingdom of God was taken from them, and give to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof.” Where now are those churches of Asia? *Your* candlestick may be removed. *You* may be rendered incapable of hearing. Surely if anything can provoke God to take away the means of grace, or to make them useless, it is a people’s awful abuse of them.

But shall I mention the happiness of those who receive the gospel, “not in word only”? “And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But, He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, *and keep it.*” “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do them.*” “Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a *doer of the word*, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

“Take heed how ye hear!” “If any man hath ears to hear let him hear.”



Gleanings in the Psalms

Psalm 102

Title: - “A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.” This psalm is a prayer far more in spirit than in words. The formal petitions are few, but a strong stream of supplication runs from beginning to end, and like an under-current, finds its way heavenward through the moanings of grief and confessions of faith which make up the major part of the psalm. To help the memory we will call this psalm – *The Patriot’s Plaint*.

Division: - In the first part of the psalm, from 1-11, the moaning monopolises every verse, the lamentation is unceasing, sorrow rules the hour. The second portion, from 12-28, has a vision of better things, a view of the gracious Lord, and His eternal existence and care for his people. Therefore, it is interspersed with sunlight as well as shaded by the cloud, and it ends up right gloriously with calm confidence for the future, and sweet restfulness in the Lord. The whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine with intervening showers and finally closes with brilliant sunset.

Treasury

Verse 13. “**Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come.**” The rainy morning of the previous part of the psalm has passed, and now the psalmist sees the sun breaking through. To many people’s minds this verse will always stand connected with William Chalmers Burns and that time of blessing that he knew at the hand of the Lord while preaching in his father’s church at Kilsyth. “When I entered the pulpit,” he tells us, “I saw before me an immense multitude ... from the town and neighbourhood, filling the seats, stairs, passages and porches ... I began by singing

Psalm 102, and was affected deeply when in reading it I came to these lines:

‘Her time for favour, which was set,
Behold, is now come to an end.’

That word *now* touched my heart, as with divine power, and encouraged the sweet hope that the set time really was *now* at hand.” Burns was not mistaken, and there began a great work in Kilsyth that day that overflowed to other parts of Scotland. No doubt, neither Burns himself, nor his old father the minister, nor any person in that neighbourhood, would ever have dreamed that God’s instrument in that time of favouring His Zion was the old minister’s renegade son who had left home some years earlier dreaming of wealth and fortune, and no thought of God whatsoever!

Verse 14. “For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.” It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a homesickness, and began to sigh after her. To the Church of God, no token can be more full of hope than to see the members thereof deeply interested in all that concerns her. No prosperity is likely to rest upon a church when carelessness about ordinances, enterprises, and services is manifest. But when even the least and lowest matter connected with the Lord’s work is carefully attended to, we may be sure that the set time to favour Zion will come.

Spurgeon

Verse 16. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in his glory.” The sun is ever glorious, even in the most cloudy day, but does not appear so until it has scattered the clouds that muffle it from the sight of the lower world. God is glorious, even when the world sees Him not; but His *declarative* glory fully appears when the glory of His mercy, truth, and faithfulness breaks forth in His people’s salvation.

William Gurnall

Verse 17. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” It is worthy of observation that he ascribes the

redemption and restoration of the people to the prayers of the faithful. It is truly a free gift, and dependent wholly upon the divine mercy; and yet, God Himself often attributes it to our prayers to stir us up and render us the more active in the pursuit of prayer.

Mollerus

Verse 24. “I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations.” There appears a greater desire to live *long*, than to live *well*. Measured by man’s desire – he cannot live long enough; measured by his good deeds – he has not lived long enough; measured by his evil deeds – he has lived too long. If God grant us a long life, may God also grant us a good life in His service and to the glory of His Zion.

Lee’s Biblical Illustrator



Mrs Seaton's Letter to the Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

Some time ago we had a story about Solomon. Remember how the Queen of Sheba came all those miles to see him, and find out more about his great wisdom? Well, in this edition, we are going to have a story about that very thing.

Solomon, when he became king, was very worried. Solomon did not really know how to rule his people wisely. He remembered that God had helped his father, King David, and so, he knew that he needed God’s help too. He spent one whole day praying to God, and even when he went to bed, he was still praying for God’s help.

While he was sleeping, Solomon had a wonderful dream. He saw God standing near-by. God said, “I will give you what you ask of me.” Solomon at once asked God for what he felt he needed most. He said,

“O Lord my God, you were with David my father; you taught him how to follow your ways; you gave him a son to be king in his place; you have let me follow my father as king, but I don’t know how to be king. I can’t even count my people they are so many. Please give me an *understanding heart*. Then I will be able to rule the people, and be able to judge the good from the bad.

God was very pleased with Solomon’s prayer. He said, “Because you have asked for wisdom instead of such things as riches, or power, or a long life, I will give you what you ask. No king in all the land will be as wise as you.”

When Solomon woke up, he knew he had been dreaming, but he also knew that God had spoken to him while he slept. From that time on, Solomon ruled his people wisely, and the people knew that God had given Solomon great understanding.

Well, boys and girls, do you think you would have asked God for the same thing? When we pray to God, we can ask God for many things, but there are certain things that God is really pleased to hear from us. It would be good for each of us to ask God for an understanding heart, like Solomon. Then, using the means that God has given us, especially His Word the Bible, we can have a sure guide to show us all God’s great promises.

Love, Mrs Seaton.

Under Orders.

The following article, adapted from B. B. Warfield’s “Shorter Writings,” originally appeared in connection with the “New Theology” of his day. It is easy to see, however, how the principles and arguments forwarded have a ready application to a whole range of “Christian” thinking that is with us yet – from the Neo-evangelicalism that dominates in the “National” churches, to the kind of fundamentalism that is almost totally ruled by what Christians “feel” to be right, and “know” to be

right, rather than by what God actually says. We recommend the reading, and re-reading, of Warfield's words.

Rudyard Kipling, in one of his "Barrack-room Ballads," expresses the inner nature of heathenism, from what may be called the soldierly point of view. The characterization runs thus:

"The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone,
He don't obey no orders, unless they is his own."

The heart of these lines, of course, is found in the fine soldierly sense of the value of order and discipline, that they utter. The soldier is conscious of not standing alone in weak isolation, but of being rather a member of an organism. His place in the organism lends worth and dignity to his individuality. What symbolises his part in the great organism is the fact that he is "under orders." Obedience to orders - which is his duty as a soldier - does not appear to him a hard necessity, but has come to appeal to him as the source of all that is good and valuable. His pride in being a soldier centres in this, that he is "under orders." The principle of "authority" is thus one of his most precious possessions; it is not only an organizing, but an elevating principle.

And so, looking out on the religious world, the simple soldier strikes on this as the essential difference between Christians and heathens. Christians are like soldiers; they are under orders. The heathen are like the disorganized rabble; they have no orders to obey, but each man is governed by his own caprices. Obedience to orders has made the Christian a man.

The fact that he has orders to obey has been the chief elevating force in his life; it is this that has given all the dignity and value to his action that it has ever possessed. The source of all the Christian's self-respect, dignity, force, and worth is thus to the soldier-man summed up in his having "orders" to obey.

Now it seems to us that this soldierly judgment really does cut, with curious precision, to the root of the matter. We commonly express this

by saying that Christianity is the only “revealed” religion. That is to say, Christians possess a body of instructions covering both what men are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man, by which they may order their lives. The heathen lack this body of instructions. In this fact lies all the difference between the two. And this fact cannot be better expressed than by saying that the Christian, like the soldier, enjoys the advantages which come from being “under orders;” and, like the soldiers, acquires not only thus a place in the progressive successes of the power which he serves, but also an inward dignity and worth not attainable in any other way. The principle of authority is inherent in the very idea of revelation. Thus, it emerges that the fact of being under an “external authority is the source of the dignity and worth of the Christian, and is ultimately the root of all the distinction between him and the heathen. The heathen obey no orders but his own. The Christian has orders from above to obey. He is governed by a power outwith himself; he is under obedience to an external authority.

This soldierly judgment runs oddly athwart much of the theological opinion of the day. Nothing is so little esteemed in our time as “external authority.” Voices are never louder or more harsh than when they are raised to denounce subjection to “external authority.” They demand that the Christian man shall emancipate himself from it and be a law to himself. Our barrack room philosopher finds this to be the very characteristic of heathenism. Historically this demand has been known in the Christian church as “rationalism.” “Rationalism,” in other words, is that tendency of thought which would discard all “external authority” in the government of Christian thought, belief, and action, in favour of the authority of man’s own self: - his reason, consciousness, ethical judgment, and what not. It has passed through many phases, and runs naturally through a wide range – from cold intellectualism on the one side, to the warmest mysticism on the other. But in all its phases, it is characterized by this fundamental trait: it scouts “external authority,” and makes its appeal to what is within the man himself. In other words, it refuses to be “under orders,” and declines to obey any order except the individual’s own. According to our barrack-room judgment, this is essentially heathen. And this judgment is right. The mark of

Christianity is that it is a revealed religion; that is, its adherents march by order from *without*, and not from within; they are under “external authority,” and from this fact they receive all that gives them worth and value.

It is marvellous how subtly and persistently the essentially heathen attitude seeks to engraft itself on Christianity. Just now we are called upon to face it in that which calls itself “New Theology,” our appeal is to be made, not to an “external authority,” but to the “Christian consciousness,” as it is to be called. What is involved here is the surrender of the whole Christian position. For, after all, even a Christian’s consciousness is *himself*. Our “New Theology” friends may indeed seek to identify their “consciousness” not with themselves but with Christ. But an assumed Christ within us is too likely to be (and has always historically evinced itself to be) only another way of following our own leading. The issue for our “New Theology” friends – and for others – is stated in this question: “Will they point to a single teaching of Jesus which they accept simply because Jesus said it, and not rather because, in their judgment, it is true?”

The finger is put here directly upon the ulcer. It is possible to talk much about Christ and yet to betray him. *The point is not to whom we attribute our guidance. The point is from whom we receive our orders.* Do we accept Jesus’ statements and obey his commands simply because Jesus affirms them and gives them? Or do we accept and obey only in so far as we judge them ourselves to be wise and true? Are we “under orders”, and do we look upon that as a source of dignity and worth to ourselves that we are under the orders of such a Leader? Or, after all are we in the position of the heathen, of whom it is said, that “They don’t obey no orders, except they is their own.”

B. B. Warfield
1851 to 1921



For The Lord's Supper

Father God, we trust we be
Part of thine own family;
While we sit around thy board,
Deign thy Presence to afford.

Richly are thy children fed,
Christ's own body is our bread;
Sure, the taste of blood divine
Far exceeds the noblest wine.

These appointed symbols show
What He suffered here below;
Set before our mental eyes,
All His dreadful agonies.

May thy Spirit now impart
To each guest a faithful heart;
Faithful hearts alone are fed
Truly with this broken bread.

All of Christ we would receive,
All ourselves to Him would give;
On us now impress thy seal,
Our backslidings kindly heal.

Having sung this hymn, we part,
May we still be joined in heart;
All united, may we be,
To each other and to thee.

(John Ryland)