

The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY

IN THE INTEREST OF JARVIS STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH, TORONTO, AND OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH.

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1: 16.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 7th, 1922.

Vol. I.

No. 17

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

A PROFANE PERSON.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Sunday evening, August 25th, 1922.
(Stenographically reported.)

"Lest there be any . . . profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

"For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Hebrews 12: 16-17.

THESE verses epitomize the life's history of one of the outstanding characters of antiquity. It is marvellous to observe what volumes God can condense into a few sentences. From the record of a life in which there was found no place for God, absolutely nothing of importance is omitted in this comprehensive summary.

It is the story of a hungry man. Esau was not hungry in any figurative or metaphorical sense: he was simply and literally hungry for his dinner. And by the gratification of his physical appetite he sacrificed forever the interests of his soul.

Esau was the first-born of Isaac's children. To him belonged the right of primogeniture; which, among the Jews, involved the right of being the priest of the household in his father's stead; all the blessings of the covenant which God had made with Abraham, and his seed after him; and the privilege of transmitting those blessings to his successors. But to the value of all these things, Esau appears to have been utterly blind. It is said of him that "for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright," with all that was involved therein.

We have here a story that is applicable to multitudes of people in our day—and very probably to not a few within these walls this evening. It is the story of a soul asleep; a soul that awakened out of his sleep; but who awakened only to discover that he had slept too long. "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

I. Here then, to begin with, is **The Story of a Soul Asleep**. We all know how it is possible for one member of the body to be dormant, to be

temporarily paralyzed, while the other members of the body regularly exercise their functions. It is possible for one member of the body to be unresponsive to anything from without, as, for instance, when we say the foot is asleep, while the body as a whole instantly responds to the slightest touch.

This is the story of one element in a complex nature being fast asleep. Here was a man who was made up of spirit, soul, and body. There was a sense in which he had to live two lives, because it was necessary that he should relate himself to two worlds. And on one side of his nature you will find that Esau was wide awake, always alert, always instantly responsive to the appeals of that world to which he belonged; but on the other side of his nature he was asleep; he was dead; he made no response whatever to the appeal of the spiritual. He was awake to the advantages of the morsel of meat; but utterly unresponsive to the appeal of the birthright, with all that it involved.

And I venture to say that that is descriptive of the condition of multitudes of people still. When the Scripture says that a man is "dead in trespasses and in sins," it does not mean that he is morally just as bad as he may be: it does not mean necessarily that he is not a kind husband, nor a good father, nor outwardly, at least, a respectable citizen. But it does mean that he is without response to the higher things of life, to the voice of the Spirit of God.

Let us see what is said of this man Esau. First of all, he is described as "a profane person." That does not mean that he used profane language in the modern sense. I need scarcely, of course, remind you of that. The word for "profane" is a very interesting word: it is suggestive of our word "thoroughfare." You see it about the streets to-day—"No thoroughfare"—the path is reserved. Now if a Greek had been wanting to put a sign to the effect that there was no thoroughfare, he would have said, "Not profane," that is, reserved. It is a word that was used to describe the ground before the sacred enclosures of heathen temples, to differentiate that which was without from that which was within. It was not enclosed; it was not fenced; it was not reserved for that particular purpose—it was profane; it was open to anybody and everybody who desired to pass that way.

And Esau was a profane person in the sense that within there was no sacred enclosure; there was no sanctuary, no holy of holies; no place reserved for God alone. His whole nature was an open plain, a marsh, a common, across which any and every vagrant spirit might pass at will; and there was no part of his nature that was fenced off, separated, and held sacred as a habitation for God.

•And is not that true of many still—that their hearts are places of public assembly? There is no lock upon the door; there is no wall round about; but it is wide open to all the materialistic, deadening influences that play upon a human soul. There is no guest-chamber within such as the Shunammite had for the man of God when he passed that way. There is no lodging-place for any spiritual impulse, for any holy thought—for the Son of God Himself. But the man's life is like the inn at Bethlehem, every room occupied, every floor trampled by common feet, and no place in which the Son of God may be born—no place for God to come in—simply "profane." Oh, what a picture of multitudes of people living to-day! What a picture of many here—simply godless and materialistic, living for the things which are seen and temporal, with no thought of God at all!

Now it is not charged against Esau, that he abused the powers of that side of his nature which was awake. He was not a glutton; he was not a drunkard; he was not a man who was inordinately given to appetite; he was simply a common, healthy man who enjoyed his dinner, as any healthy man

ought to do. I say it is not charged against him that he abused the powers of that side of his nature which were awake.

On the contrary, there were many things about Esau which were most admirable. He was a good son; he was considerate of the requirements of his aged father. We read that "Isaac loved Esau, and did eat of his venison." And have you not seen it in a family? If anybody wants anything, they know which member of the family is at their service to supply it; if father or mother finds himself or herself in a difficult situation, they know which son of the family will come to their help. And Isaac knew; he had learned to lean upon Esau; and Esau had always been kind and considerate. And when the old man was out of sorts, and needed something to cheer him up, and something, perhaps, to tempt his failing appetite, it was this generous son of his who came in from the hunting and prepared him "savoury meat, such as he loved."

Esau was terribly betrayed by his brother, abominably treated; and in a moment of anger he vowed he would kill him. But he made no effort whatever to fulfil his threat; and when, years afterwards, Jacob returned full of fear lest Esau should have nourished the old grudge, as soon as Esau saw him he ran towards him, and threw his arms about his neck and kissed him, and wept. And when Esau saw the presents which Jacob had sent, he said, "What are these?" And Jacob very humbly said, "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord." But Esau, with his characteristic generosity, said, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself." He had forgotten all about the past; he nourished no enmity against his brother.

It is one of the most terrible tragedies of history: to read of a man having so many admirable qualities, so amiable, so lovable in a thousand respects, and yet destitute of any interest in God! Ah, are there not men like that? You say, "Well, sir, what more do you want? You ask his wife, she will tell you the sort of man he is; ask his mother; ask those who deal with him in business; ask his neighbors; ask anybody, and they will tell you that his hand is always open to the needy, and that he is always responsive to the cry of his fellows. And as long as a man does that, what more is required?"

Is the entire obligation of the law summed up in a man's duty to his neighbor? I know that Esau ought to have been all that he was—but he ought to have been something more. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." But "the first and the great commandment"—and as I have so often reminded you, the first and the great commandment is always "first," not in order merely, but in importance—the first and the great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; and that, Esau completely ignored. Esau built no altar; he never bowed his knee to God; he was a "profane" person. The only charge registered against Esau is that for one morsel of meat he despised and sold his birthright. That is the only complaint which the Book makes against him. Not that he was a thief, or a blasphemer, or in any sense a bad man, as men estimate character; but he was a man who weighed things in the balances, and his eyes were open chiefly to the realm of that which is seen and temporal. Esau had a great appreciation of the realm of the material; for the "morsel of meat" stands not merely for the indulgence of the physical—the "morsel of meat" stands for the material, for the temporal, for the things which are seen. And the "birthright" stands for the spiritual, for that which belongs to the world of the unseen, for that which is abiding. Esau weighed these two, the one against the other; and on the principle that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," he said, "What profit shall this birthright—this thing of the future, this thing of the realm beyond—what profit shall this birthright do to me?" And so for one

morsel of meat, for a dish of lentiles, for the gratification of an hour, he sacrificed his soul's interests.

And that is characteristic, I venture to say, of many whom we regard as among the best of people—the people whom we meet and respect and love; the people who in so many respects are altogether worthy; but who yet have no place for God in their lives. We speak to them of the blessings of the covenant, of salvation by grace, of the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"; but they have no ears to hear, nor eyes to see. O that I could get the ear of some such this evening! It will pay you, my brother, to go without your dinner; to make less profit in your business; to sacrifice the pleasures of the hour; to shut your eyes to this present interesting and alluring world, and look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." But Esau smiles, and says, "I really do not know what you are talking about; I do not see any city; I have no consciousness of what you call the spiritual world; I have no interest in what you call the covenant; I feel no need of it whatever. Why should I? The blood of Jesus Christ? I know nothing about it. All that I care for is the present, call it a 'morsel of meat,' or what you will."

II. Let us consider now, **The Story of a Soul Awakened.** "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected." What volumes are condensed into that one word—"afterward!" Can you schoolboys parse it? Tell me what part of speech it is. "Afterward!" Some lad will say, "It is an adverb, is it not, sir?" Yes. And what is an adverb? An adverb is a word that modifies words expressive of action or quality. And here is a word that modifies the words relating to Esau's action, which relates his later wisdom to his early folly. "Afterward!" "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel." O the difference! "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." O the pain of it! "Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

"Afterward!" It is a word that is suggestive of proportion and perspective; of the distant view; of the ability to see things relatively; to get a larger view of things, and to determine thereby the true values of life. "Afterward!" If we could only anticipate the "afterward"! If a man when he drops the spark from his tongue that is "set on fire of hell" could only see the conflagration he is going to kindle; if he could see the ruin which will be wrought in the lurid glare of that fire kindled by an evil tongue, would he drop the spark? "What will ye give me?" said Judas. "And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." And you can see the miser rubbing his hands. "I have got it; I have got it; I will sell Him for thirty pieces of silver." But O, "afterward," when he had got the money, it was to him like the very coals of hell, and throwing the silver ringing down upon the temple floor, he said, "Take it! Take it! I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!" If he could have seen things as they appeared "afterward," the wealth of the world could not have tempted him to sell his Lord.

Well, Esau was asleep. **Mark a soul's awakening!** Esau has lived in a beautiful out-of-doors; Esau has trained himself to believe that there is no better light than sunshine—that there is nothing sweeter to the taste than that which an arrow from his quiver can bring to his board. He has trained himself to believe that there is no music so entrancing as the song of birds, and the ripple of the brooks, and all the murmuring music of the world of nature. He is a child of the field; and every sense is awake and alert to all the glories, to all the fascination, of God's beautiful world. And he says, "If I have that, I have everything." But there comes a time when he discovers that behind

the door of the promise, within the compass of the covenant, behind the veil of sense, there is another world; and that it is a still more beautiful world than the world in which he has been living; that it is fuller of treasure and of joy. And something within Esau awakes, and he comes knocking at that door, saying, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept."

And that awakening comes in the providence of God to many—I think perhaps to all—a sense of the Unseen, and of the reality of the future. Here, for instance, is a business man immersed in business. He calls himself a "hard-headed business man," whatever that is. But he lives in facts and figures; he is proud of his ability to get on—and he is getting on. His home is a place in which he passes the night, and where he comes at meal time. But he says a man cannot live on sentiment. (I remember going, by request of somebody in this city, to see just such a business man, in old London. I would as soon have a marble image to live with—hard, cold, unsympathetic, just a machine for grinding out business, and making money.) He goes from his house in haste in the morning; and some time during the day his telephone rings. He takes the receiver down and listens, and at once his face takes on an ashen hue. He drops business, rushes out, jumps into his car, and in a moment or two rushes up the front steps of his house, and is met by one who raises a warning hand. "How is he, Doctor?" "Absolute quiet, please!" "But, Doctor, I want to know how he is. I was so busy at noon I did not even say 'good-bye' to the little fellow; did not have time to call him to my knee; and now I want to see him." "But," says the Doctor, "you are a strong man, aren't you? You can bear bad news? Well, your boy will never speak to you again." "He must, Doctor! he must! I did not even say 'good-bye' to him." "Well, I have to tell you the truth; he will not speak to you again." And in a little while the crepe is on the door.

One of the managers later comes up from the place of business to see his chief about a very important matter. He makes his way into his presence, and spreads the matter of business before him. But he says, "Do not talk to me about business; I do not care anything about business." "But, sir," says his manager, "it is absolutely necessary that you give it attention." "Nothing is necessary," he says. "I thought as you do twenty-four hours ago. I prided myself on my stoicism. I said a man could not live on sentiment, and I did not know that my father-heart was sleeping; I did not know that there was another world from which my folly was excluding me. But now I am awake, and I care nothing for business." And when other years have passed, the man stands in the cemetery where he has laid the beautiful mother of his darling boy, and where he has buried his all. He has amassed great wealth; he is a man of great fortune and influence. "But," he cries, "the emptiness of it all! Now I can see that it was all for them, and now that they are gone, there is nothing left." And in his impoverishment he lifts his eyes heavenward to cry, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God."

My brother, it cannot be done! The hunger of the soul cannot be satisfied with business, nor with wealth, nor with pleasure, nor with fame, nor even with wife and family. They are all mortal and must leave you. And when the soul awakes it will be to the realization that you are poor indeed, unless you have that one all-comprehensive blessing of the Father, even "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

III. The sad part of my story is that **Esau Awakened When It Was Too Late**. "Afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it

carefully with tears." There is a sense in which Esau did repent. He repented of his early choice; but he found then it was impossible to satisfy himself with that which had abundantly satisfied him before. And now: "when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected"; and he finds no place in which he may again change his mind back to his former state, though he seeks it carefully with tears.

I have never been particularly concerned as to whether the scriptures descriptive of the future state of the impenitent are to be interpreted literally or figuratively; whether hell is a place and condition in which there is literal fire, or whether it be but a figure. All I have to say is this: That the scriptural descriptions of the final state of the lost in their least awful aspect are so terrible that they are hell enough; and as to whether the literal or figurative interpretation be the worst, I am not prepared to say. But this is certain: that for a soul to awake sufficiently to get a glimpse of glory and miss it; for a soul thus to get a view of the loveliness of Jesus, and to lose Him; for the soul to understand the possibility of salvation through the blood, and never to receive it; for a soul to get a glimpse of the happy reunions of the future, and to see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the hosts of the redeemed, in the kingdom of God, and himself cast out, that is hell: and it is hell enough! To see what he might have been, and to know that by his own folly he has thrown his soul away—to know that, is to taste the most terrible remorse of which any creature is capable—to feel that would be to taste "the second death."

Do you not see it? "When he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." And the scripture abounds with teaching on this matter. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." "You had no place in your heart for Me. There was no guest-chamber for the Son of God. There never was a recognition of the cross. There never was a spirit humbled before the Sovereign of the universe. You had no place for Me. Depart, I never knew you." The scripture, I say, is full of that terrible truth.

"There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath.

"To pass that limit is to die,
To die as if by stealth:
It does not quench the beaming eye,
Nor pale the glow of health.

"How long may we go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

"An answer from the skies is sent,
'Ye that from God depart:
While it is called to-day, repent,
And harden not your heart.'"

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Remember the "afterward!" May the Spirit of God make us wise now!—now!—now! It may be now or never! There was a moment, mark you, a fateful moment of decision in Esau's life. He had been gradually coming up to the crisis of his life, and there came one last moment, a point of time as the twinkling of an eye, when "for a morsel of meat he sold his birthright." At last, he simply crossed that line, and it was done forever! And there comes that moment to everyone. It may strike for you to-night, this hour—hush!—While angels bend on hovering wing about you, and God the Holy Spirit calls to you to choose between the carnal and the spiritual, between the temporal and the eternal, between darkness and light, between hell and heaven, between Barabbas and Christ—at this instant, you may stand at "the great divide"—this tick of the clock may settle your eternal destiny! What is your answer?

JARVIS STREET AND THE CONVENTION

The interests of the kingdom of God are wider than the interests of any one church. The local church is of great importance. The religious zeal which concerns itself about the salvation of the heathen in the regions beyond, but is careless of the spiritual state of a next-door neighbor, is something worse than a zeal that is "not according to knowledge"; but that is an equally defective vision which, occupied with the need at hand, has no eyes for that which is afar off. We trust it is the ambition of individual members of Jarvis Street, by divine grace, to develop symmetrical Christian characters which shall display the graces of the Holy Spirit in such balance and proportion that beholders may observe the beauty of the Lord coming upon us. And, similarly, we may hope and pray for a church life ever enlarging in symmetrical proportions. A lop-sided, disproportioned life, whether of the individual or the church, can never commend the perfectly blended beauties of "the word of the truth of the gospel."

We must observe proportion in doctrine; remembering always the many-sidedness of the truth. Over-emphasis often involves misrepresentation; a half-truth may be an untruth. Therefore, among all the "isms" which swarm about us like the flies of Egypt, let us beware of faddism and fanaticism. Girding up the loins of our minds, let us endeavor to understand and to proclaim "the whole counsel of God."

But we must be symmetrical in practice as well as in faith. A church, like the members who compose it, requires variety in its interests and activities in order to grow up into Christ, Whose interests embrace the universe and span the eternities.

We have written this to impress upon our members the necessity of cultivating a wide view of the responsibilities and privileges of the Church of Christ.

The Annual Convention of the Baptist Churches of Ontario and Quebec will be held in this city in October. While only delegates can participate in the proceedings, since the sessions are public, we hope every member of the church will endeavor to attend as many sessions as possible.

We have been blessed with a large number of new members, and we earnestly desire that every one of them should become actively interested in the affairs of our denominational life. With this in view we propose to publish for the next few weeks a series of short articles relating to some of the matters which will engage the attention of the delegates at the forthcoming Convention, and we shall write specially for the purpose of endeavor-

ing to enlist our whole membership, as well as many others who will read these words, in most earnest prayer, that in the Convention in October our gracious God may mightily display His power by disposing the hearts of all delegates to desire His glory, by illuminating their minds to apprehend His will in relation to all Convention affairs, and by constraining their wills to do what the Spirit of God may direct.

In at least one particular we are more favored than our brethren of the Northern Baptist Convention: We are under no necessity of holding a Fundamentalist Conference; for all but a numerically insignificant minority of the members of the churches composing the Convention are Fundamentalists. And what is true of our churches is equally true of our pastors—the overwhelming majority—we venture to repeat, all but a numerically insignificant minority, are uncompromisingly true to the fundamentals of the faith. It is, however, always possible for an aggressive minority to defeat the desire of the majority if care be not taken to put the majority on their guard. We have no reason to suppose that the Convention has moved from the position taken at its meeting in 1919. We do well, however, to pray that every act of the Convention in October next may be so ordered by the Spirit of God as to give effect, through the activities of the various Boards, to that scriptural decision. We will continue this subject next week.

MORE PRAYER.

God is blessing us on every hand. We had baptism on Wednesday, and others will be baptized next Sunday. Sixteen were baptized during August, and last Sunday evening the Pastor gave the hand of fellowship to sixteen. We have tried to be instant in what some regard as out of season. Let us now be instant in season as the more favorable conditions of the fall obtain. And remember **The Gospel Witness**. Ask God to send in hundreds of dollars so that we may not be limited in the use of it.

Change in Night of Meeting. Wednesday last it was by unanimous vote decided to change our nights of meeting to Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, beginning October 3rd.

The Church Calendar

For the week beginning Sunday, September 10th, 1922.

SUNDAY

10.00—Prayer Service in the Church Parlor, Mr. George Greenway.

10.30—Communion Service.

11.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

2.30—Open-Air Work with the Gospel Car, starting from Jarvis Street Church.

3.00—The Bible School will meet.

5.30—Open-Air Service on Gerrard Street.

6.00—Prayer Meeting in Church Parlor.

7.00—Public Worship. The Pastor will preach.

MONDAY, WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY—8.00—Prayer Service.

THURSDAY—8.00—Open Air Service, Gerrard St. gate of Allen Gardens.

The Parliament St. Branch, 250 Parliament St. Sunday: Bible School, 3.00; Evangelistic Service, conducted by Mr. W. L. McKay, 7.00; Thursday, 8.00, Prayer Meeting.