

The Gospel Witness

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T. T. SHIELDS, *Pastor and Editor.*

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

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"A YOUNG MAN'S TRIP ABROAD."

(The Second Sermon in a series on "The Adventures of a Modern Young Man.")

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Massey Music Hall, Toronto, Sunday Evening, November 30, 1924.
(Stenographically reported)

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country."—Luke 15: 13.

LAST Sunday evening we saw this young man asking for his independence: "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me". And his father divided unto him his living; he made him independent, allowed him to do just as he liked—as the Lord has made us free agents. Permitting us to use our own judgments, to exercise our own wills; He has divided unto us His living, and made us, not machines, but men.

The question before us this evening is, What did this young man do with his newly-acquired powers? To what use did he put the priceless gift of liberty? And our text tells us that "not many days after" he "gathered all together"—everything that belonged to him—and took his journey into a far country.

I.

HE DID NOT USE HIS POWERS IN THE SERVICE OF HIS FATHER. No sooner had his father divided unto him his living than he gathered it all together, and said, "This is mine"; and he immediately turned his back upon his father and his father's house, and "took his journey into a far country." That is to say, *he recognized no obligation whatever to his father.* He had claimed an inheritance in his father. "As a son", said he, "I have a right to expect something from him who gave me life." His father recognized that the son had some right in him, and "he divided unto him his living." But on the other hand, the son failed to recognize that the father had any right in him. He did not immediately disgrace his father's name; he did not fall into outward and flagrant sin at once; he could not be charged with living a dissolute life immediately. Not that! He began by ignoring his obligation to his father. "I

have done with him; I recognize no duty whatever toward him; all that I have come from him—I give him nothing back.” “He took his journey—”.

And that is an epitome of all human history; it is the first chapter in every human biography; it is the story of your life and mine—a failure to recognize God. This man related himself to others, by the way; apparently he recognized some obligation to other people. But the one person who was to have no part whatever in his life was his father. He left him behind.

It is popular in our day to define sin and unrighteousness in terms of human relationships: the righteous man is the man who exercises his duty as a son, as a father, as a husband, as a citizen, as a neighbour. He does not owe anybody anything; he is not guilty of any particular moral lapse—he is a righteous man. But his righteousness is defined in terms of his relation to his fellows. On the other hand, sin is defined in the same way. A sinner is a man who does wrong to his neighbour, a man who commits some offence against society. But there is no recognition in that view of life of a man's obligation to God. And the charge which the Bible brings against everyone of us is that which is implied in this verse, that we have begun by ignoring God. He crowned us; he made us kings; He put a sceptre in our hands; He made us our own masters; He gave us the use of our own wills, in order that we might serve Him, that we might be kings, having dominion over the works of His hands, but subject to Him Who is the Lord of all.

Instead of that, we have ignored God. There are men and women here this evening, I have no doubt, whose records would bear, on the surface, a very close examination—eminently respectable people, thoroughly righteous so far as their human relations are concerned. But, my friend, God's charge against you is that you have ruled Him out, that you have ignored God; you have not recognized God. Which is the first and great commandment? “Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” But the second commandment is not only second in order, it is second in importance, and in relation to the fundamental things. The first duty of every man is to recognize his obligation to God. There is the difficulty with every one of us. We have not used our powers in the divine service. This young man ignored his father. We have ignored God; we have failed to render unto Him His due.

I remind you of this principle: I said to you last Sunday night that God as the Creator recognized, according to the teaching of this Book, that we have, by virtue of our creation, certain inalienable rights. He created us: He called us into being. And by virtue of that fact, we have a right to expect something from Him. But the other side of that is true: He has a right to expect something from us. And as surely as, by creation, we have a portion in God which He has recognized, endowing us with all the powers we enjoy, so He has a portion in us; and He will claim that which is His due and demand that you pay Him what you owe. No man, my friend, can ignore God with impunity. That is the sin of this age. That is the sin of the pulpit, if I may dare to say so. We are exhorting men to do their duty on the earthly plane—and that has its place, we ought not to do that less—but the pity of it is, that men may go from place to place, week after week, and never hear one solitary word that calls them to a recognition of their obligation to God.

Is that not true of some of us here to-night? It was true of all of us; but it is still true of some of us. “Well,” perhaps you say, “I should like to have a further elaboration of that point; I should like to have it more clearly

stated than that. Just what do you mean when you say I have ignored God?" Well, ask yourself whether it be true or not. What is your portion of goods? We talked about it last Sunday night,—all the endowments of spirit, soul, and body. May I ask in whose service they have been engaged? What about reason? How have you used it? What have you done with your portion of goods? Have you used it to try to find God? What about the imagination? What of those moments of reverie? What pictures float before the mind in that imaginary world to which we all stand related? Have you ever tried to picture God? Have you ever wanted to hang in memory's gallery a portrait of your Father? Have you used your imagination on God's side? What of our memories? When a man goes into court, and he is asked a very important question—he is there as a witness—and he is asked a very embarrassing question, perhaps, and he answers, "I don't remember." I heard of a certain man who appeared in a court. I think in this city, I am not sure about the place. And question after question was put to him; and each time he said, "I don't remember—I don't remember", until at last the judge looked at him, and said, "You have a very convenient memory, Mr. So-and-So",—a terrible rebuke from the bench to be given to a supposedly reputable man. But the judge could do no more than that. But, my friends, when we come before the great Judge, we dare not tell Him that we cannot remember. He knows whether we can or not. The trouble of it is, we have not tried to remember. What is memory? Some people imagine that some other people are endowed naturally with good memories. The memory can be trained just as any other faculty can be trained,—and it can be trained to forget. What have you done with your memory in relation to God? That is my question. Listen! "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations"—that are immoral? that are skeptical? that are like the Canaanites, a plague upon the earth? Oh, no!—"and all the nations that forget God." Just forget! "Bless the Lord, O my soul," said one of His ancient servants, "and all that is within me"—summoning all his powers to the divine service—"all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

And yet some of us have forgotten Him for many a day. Memory has not been exercised in His service at all. If I were to tell some funny story to-night, that would make you laugh—and I don't mind people laughing: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine"—but if I could tell some funny story to-night, especially if it were a little bit questionable, you would go home from this service, and you would tell everyone to-morrow what you heard at Massey Hall. That would be the one thing you would remember. Is that not so? Is it not a fact that all the faculties of the mind are biased against God? We have done just like this man: we have turned our back upon God, to take our journey "into a far country".

And then, had I time for a careful analysis, I could show you how every power—the affections, the judgment, the will, the conscience, everything—instead of serving God, has been opposed to Him. We have gone away from Him.

II.

But I call your attention to this, that when this young man went away, HE TOOK ALL HIS BELONGINGS WITH HIM: he gathered all together; he left himself without excuse for ever coming home again. When he crossed the threshold of his father's house and put his foot outside, there was not one thing within that door to which he had any longer a title,—not a thing. He carried all that belonged to him with him into the far country. Haven't we all done

that? When the sons of Jacob went down to Egypt they left their brother Simeon there and came back home. And, even apart from the corn that was in Egypt, the presence of their brother Simeon was a reason for their returning thither again. When you and I turned our back upon God, what did we leave behind that we could claim as our own as a justification for our daring to come back to the Father's house,—anything?

Ah, my friends, this may not be very popular. But I think we ought to be living for the day when God will open His books. It may be that someone who is listening to me to-night will say, "I declare, I listened to that man for half an hour or so, and I never felt so uncomfortable in my life; I would not go to hear him again." Perhaps you will say that to-morrow morning, adding, "I went home and I could not sleep." Well, I hope that will be true, unless you find rest in Christ. My business is to bring every man and woman to face the question of his or her personal relationship to God. That is the question. And I want to know whether you will dare to say in the presence of God that by nature—apart from His redeeming, His abounding, grace—whether you will dare to say that there is one thing left that belongs to you in God? He "gathered all together"; and he went out, bag and baggage, as though he never expected, or intended, to return again.

That is the history of the human race, parabolically stated; that is what the old theologians used to call "total depravity". It simply means that men have taken all that belongs to them with them; and that if they ever get back inside the Father's house again, it will be by grace—grace—grace; never on the ground of merit, never on the ground of righteousness; but because grace abounds where sin doth much more abound.

Now, let me just state the case here, so that you can think it over yourselves to-night when you are not sleeping. I want to give you something to think about, if you don't give yourself to Christ. I should like to keep you awake to-night, and to-morrow night, and for ever, until you rest in Christ. Now, what have we? In what did his portion of goods consist? The Scripture tells us we have spirit, soul, and body. I want to ask, speaking to men and women who make no profession of faith in Christ, who have not been born again, How much of that is on God's side apart from the regenerating grace of God? How much is still left in the Father's house? Any of it?

I have not time for a careful and particular analysis of the elements that make up spirit, soul, and body, but I can be suggestive, at least. What do we mean by spirit? It is that part of our immaterial nature that has a capacity for God. It is like the little chamber on the wall that the Shunammite made in her cottage-home for the man of God, that he might turn in thither. It is a little place;—no, it is a big place,—but there is a place in every man's nature that was made to be the dwelling place of God the Spirit. "God is a Spirit." He made us for Himself; and in that spiritual realm He wills to dwell.

But what about your spiritual nature? Did you leave that behind with the Father? Have you sinned only as to your body, and as to your mind, thinking wrong thoughts? Or has another spirit taken possession of the dwelling place of God? When we speak of spirit, we mean that part of our nature that naturally, that instinctively, relates itself to another life,—the instinct of immortality. I don't need anyone to prove to me that I am going to live by-and-by. Instinctively we know that we shall live on, and that death is not the end of all things. There is a part of our nature that does not die with the body, a part that goes on into the life beyond; and I want to know whether that part has been reserved for God? Is it ready for God when you get yonder? When we speak of the spirit, we mean that part of our nature in which the faculty of conscience resides,—the power to distinguish between right and wrong, the moral nature. "Oh," but you say, "conscience is on the side of God." Is it? Conscience always has a backward look, I grant you, toward the Father's house; but conscience, like memory, can be trained, and has been trained; and the greatest crimes of history have been committed in the name of conscience. You can so train your conscience that you can put it to sleep, at least so that it will cease to protest against any kind of iniquity. Is conscience on God's side in your case? I am afraid, brother, you have gone on in an evil course for many a year. In the beginning conscience whispered and rebuked, until at last you silenced it; and you can go on doing the same thing week after week, month after month, without being disturbed by con-

science at all. You carried your conscience with you away from God. That is what you did. Oh, I wish I could talk to you a week on that point.

And then, take the various faculties of the mind, and see if it be not true that our affections—what a capacity for loving, men have—and somehow or another our affections, instead of being set upon things above have been set on things below, haven't they? You say, "But, sir, I have known a great many men of rich endowment mentally; they have been men of great power; and they have rendered great service to their fellows by the exercise of their powers—". But stop to think of what some such men have done; all their powers have been exercised in the realm of the material and temporal. I hope you don't waste much time reading the works of H. G. Wells,—a man of brilliant intellect, but if ever there was an example in the world of a perverted intellect, of one who "gathered all together" and left absolutely nothing to God, he is an example,—carried them all away, used every power he has to get away from God. The Bible calls the natural mind the "carnal mind";—that is to say, the mind, the powers of the mind, are on the side of the flesh. Carnal means fleshly; and it means that naturally men use all their mental powers in the service of the flesh, in the service of the things that are of the earth earthy, and not in the service of the King.

If you can think of anything you have left behind, I wish you would tell me. I know I left nothing behind. I remember when I wakened up to the realization of the truth that there was nothing in the Father's house that belonged to me; I had had my portion of goods and I carried it all away; I had nothing to take back with me. We are hopelessly bankrupt, every one!

I have spoken of the spirit, and of the mind. What about the powers of the body? Oh, what powers, there are in a human voice! For whom has your voice been used? You carried it with you; and you did not use it for the King. Our hands, all our physical endowments, used in the service of the things that are perishable, instead of being dedicated to God!

I have only suggested this; but when you sit down in the quiet of your own room to-night, I ask you to do this—we may never meet again. I hope you will come again, but even if you are angry, I must be faithful with you— but when you go home, and you say, "I wonder if that preacher was right? I wonder if there is not a bit of baggage in the Father's house that I could go and claim? Is there not something that would justify my going and knocking at the door, and saying, 'I have come for that which belongs to me?'" Try to remember something, if you can. I am positive that, by the direction of the Spirit of God, you will come to see clearly that you "gathered all together" and that you have absolutely cut your connection with the Father's house.

III.

Then this word. Do you follow me? First: he failed to use his powers in his father's service. Secondly, he gathered all that belonged to him and took it away with him, leaving himself without any justification for returning. And having left his father's house, HE USED ALL HIS POWERS TO PUT THE GREATEST DISTANCE POSSIBLE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS FATHER. He "took his journey into a far country." Now, it is only three words: "A far country". If you have any doubt of the divine inspiration of Scripture, sit down with the parable of the Prodigal Son, and read it over and over again, and mark every little word, and every preposition, and you will find it is inbreathed by the Spirit of God. Bring your foot rule; bring your measuring line; measure it even by the distances of the astronomer. The "far country"! Where is it? I know this: it suggests that men have used all their powers to put as great a distance as possible between themselves and God. Right from the beginning—in Genesis—we read that the transgressors hid themselves among the trees of the garden; they put a distance between themselves and God,—and they have been doing that ever since.

Have you ever stopped to consider the psychological reason for the popularity of the doctrine of Evolution? Why is that strange dream so popular? I am not going to discuss the principle itself: it would be beside my purpose this evening: I refer to it only as an illustration. But read God's Book and God's Book will tell you this: "In the beginning"—there He is, a transcendent Personality—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; and I can go back through my Bible to the beginning and I can get to God.

I don't know the date of the beginning. I am not asked to date the beginning; but this Bible brings God nearer to me all the time. I cannot turn a page of it in the Old Testament or the New Testament, but everywhere the Speaker is God—God—God. In the beginning, in the end, all the way through, it is the Book of God. And men don't like to be reminded of God! They don't want to see God in the stars, or even in the lily of the field; and so they come to me and say, "We have found something". I was reading, I think it was in a Health Bulletin someone handed to me, published by the Medical Health Officer of Toronto, only last night, telling, I think it was, when man assumed his upright position five hundred million years ago. I don't know how he knows it. That is rather a far off country. I cannot measure distances like that.

Bring a man a theory that will push the great First Cause back, so that between him and God there are unnumbered millions, and millions, and millions of years; that will make Him only a Something, or a Someone, a Force, a Law, a Something other than a personal God,—that satisfies the depraved conscience of man, and he will grasp at it. Why the prevalence of the doctrine of Evolution? I think that pamphlet said that no intelligent man doubts it now. I venture to say that no man who has learned to think accurately believes it. It is the most absurd philosophy that has ever been propounded. Not one solitary bit of evidence has been adduced to prove it, not one single instance of the transmutation of species have all the scientific minds of the world been able to discover! Professor Bateman, former President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, said it was still only a hypothesis, nothing but a theory; and yet our schools and colleges and universities embrace it; and it is published broadcast, because it pushes God off the stage, or if not, it pushes Him back out of sight. "And not many days after he gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." And men from that day until now have been using all their powers to get as far away from the personal God as they possibly could.

Now, I cannot measure the distance intellectually: it is not a geographical distance, you know; for I tell you God is right beside you where you are sitting to-night. He is not far from any one of us. He is here:

"Speak to Him now for He hears, and spirit with spirit can meet,
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

He is close beside you. You may say, "God be merciful to me a sinner", and He hears: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Notwithstanding that, there is a sense in which, apart from Christ, we dwell in the far country. I say, it is intellectually far away. For listen! "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." We read sometimes of a certain aeronaut who has made a new altitude; he has climbed higher, nearer the stars than anyone ever did before. But no aeroplane was ever made that will carry you to that altitude, "As the heavens"—not the stars—"as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." You cannot keep up with God intellectually. I wonder if there is any young man here, a student, perhaps, who thinks he shows his superiority by doubting this Book? You are only taking your journey into the far country, that is all.

Oh, no, my friends, the real sense is that we are morally separated from God, far away from His image and likeness. Men blame God for every bit of evil that comes into their lives. I have been a pastor of a church for a number of years, and have tried, in my simple way, to help folks,—very often in a temporal way. And I have found somehow or another that the people for whom you do most are the people who are most ungrateful. A friend of mine, Dr. Norris, tells of his experience with a certain man that turned against him. When he heard it, he said to his wife, "I don't know why he should have done that; I don't think I ever showed him any special kindness." You lend a man a hundred dollars, and he will be your enemy—I have done that. I don't say I have had many hundred dollars, but I have done it—and he won't come to see you. As soon as you show a man a kindness, he will walk on the other side of the street, or do anything to get out of your way.

And then some man comes staggering along in a state of moral bankruptcy,

and he says, "Why did God permit all this to come to me?" My dear brother, he just allowed you to have your own way. You said, "Let me have my own way. Divide unto me your living." And He let you have your portion; and you squandered it; and you brought yourself where you are. He did not send you to the far country. You went there yourself! Don't blame God. You may blame the church for a hundred things—and we are guilty of a good part of it. The Lord knows we are far from perfection. May He make us more Christ-like every day!—but if we are guilty of all these things, I want to make this final appeal, Why do you desire to put a distance between yourself and God? He has shown you nothing but kindness all your lifelong: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above"; every blessing you have ever had has come from His hands, and every bit of evil has come from your own. You are responsible for it yourself. Why, then, turn our backs upon God instead of coming to Him?

I shall have to anticipate my story, and tell you that though the prodigal left nothing behind to which he was entitled, when at last he did come back, he found there was something in his father's house reserved for him by grace; and he got a new pair of shoes, although he did not deserve them; and he got a new robe, although he had forfeited all right to it; and a good meal, although he had nothing to pay for it; and he got a ring on his hand,—and that was the last thing he had any reasonable right to expect from his father. But, my brother, it was all of grace. The father's limitless, boundless, infinite grace! When the prodigal had forfeited all, out of his fulness he enriched him once again. And so, although we have dwelt in the far country, "ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ", all the distance may be bridged, and we may come into fellowship with God again.

How near may we come? How near may we come? This word, and I have done. The Lord said to His disciples on that last night of the feast, "One of you shall betray me." And they began to say, "Lord, is it I, is it I?" One man did not ask that question. "He then lying on Jesus' breast"—so near that he was permitted to pillow his tired head upon the breast of the Incarnate God—leaning upon Jesus, he said, "Lord, who is it? It is not I. I could not do it here." "One of you"—every one of you, will commit this folly over again in the far country; you will go farther yet unless you come so near to Him that you can lean upon His breast. Abide in Him, and then you can say, "Lord, who is it?"

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"

Oh, will you not come home? Leave the far country and come back, not only to the Father's house, but to the Father Himself; and let us lose our sins, nay, leave them where Jesus put them,—in His grave; and go on with Him into eternal glory?

"I hear Thy welcome voice,
That calls me, Lord, to Thee,
For cleansing in Thy precious blood
That flowed on Calvary."

SUNDAY'S BIBLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

Last Sunday we had a total attendance in our Bible School of one thousand and twelve. The attendance in the various departments, with the percentages of attendance to enrolment, was as follows: Adult, 74 per cent.; Young People's, 84 per cent.; Intermediate, 69.5 per cent.; Junior, 78.8 per cent.; Primary, 90 per cent.; Beginners', 79.5 per cent.; and Cradle Roll, 76 per cent. It is one thing to have a great Bible School on paper; it is another thing to have such a school in actual attendance. It will be noted that the percentage of attendance to enrolment ranged from 69.5 per cent. to 90 per cent. We confidently expect to reach the twelve hundred mark by the end of the year. Watch for reports!

In the afternoon there were 296 in attendance at the Parliament Street School and 61 at our Chinese Bible Class.

The publication of this paper as a missionary enterprise is made possible by the gifts of members of Jarvis Street Church and others, and is sent to subscribers by mail for \$2.00 (under cost) per year. If any of the Lord's stewards who read this have received blessing, we shall be grateful for any thank-offering you may be able to send to The Witness Fund at any time; and especially for your prayers that the message of The Witness may be used by the Holy Spirit for the defence of the Faith, the salvation of souls, and the exaltation of Christ. As our funds make it possible, we hope to add to our free list, from time to time, the names of ministers at home and missionaries abroad.

EDITORIAL

"THE GOD OF HOPE."

In the garden of the palace of Hampton Court there is a famous vine, over one hundred and fifty years old, from which grapes are cut for the royal table. And we have seen some of the rare clusters hanging on the vine,—large, luscious grapes, each cluster so full, and the grapes so close together, that no connecting stems could be seen. And in the royal garden of Inspiration there are many such clusters—grapes of Eschol they are, samples of the fruitful Land of Promise. And there is no way of dividing a rich cluster like that but to pluck out a grape at a time from its stem. And our distressed and tempted spirits need the cool refreshment of such heavenly fruit; especially at a time when the hot breath of trouble, following in the wake of war, withers so many of the flowers and fruits of earth. We do well in these days to make our way to the spiritual uplands where we may be able to say, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste". Here is such a cluster as we have described: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

I.

Our God is "the God of hope". Our metaphor is not overstrained: "O taste and see that the Lord is good". Our souls are nourished by the truth: "Thy words were found", said the prophet, "and I did eat them." This verse must mean that God is always hopeful. He never despairs. Despair is the emotion men feel when hope expires in their breasts; when circumstances pass beyond their control; when their hearts' desire is beyond their reach; when their resources are exhausted; when their last and utmost effort in the direction of their great desideratum has failed, hope dies, and despair supervenes. But circumstances never pass beyond God's control; His resources are inexhaustible; and His will never fails. He never despairs of individuals. When human hopelessness exclaims, "He hath been dead four days", the God of hope Incarnate commands, "Lazarus, come forth". He does not despair of nations. When a nation has reached the lowest level of national misfortune, and even of moral worth, so that it is but as bones in the midst of a valley, He calmly predicts a national revival, and restoration to power and prestige and glory. He looked with hope upon a ruined world. When following upon some universal judgment "the earth was without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep", conscious of the omnipotent, creative forces latent in His thought, it was the voice of the God of hope which commanded, "Let there be light". And still it is true, "God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all". There is no life so wasted, no soul so dead; that He despairs of it:

"Ah, grace! into unlikeliest hearts
It is Thy boast to come;
The glory of Thy light to find
In darkest spots a home."

And as He built the nation of His chosen people of one childless man, so now He reserves for himself all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, even though now the whole world lieth in the wicked one.

We must learn therefore never to call the hour dark. No one of us can claim immunity from sorrow and death on the ground of such moral perfection as would alone entitle us to it; but when Jesus died, absolute goodness was pierced with the sword, and foully murdered at high noon. Then and only then has the moral government of the universe really been challenged. But it was then, when incarnate righteousness and truth was murdered and driven out of the world. Yet it was of that black hour He sang prophetically, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption". And this great principle should inspire us in the darkest hours of our experience. God never despairs of the invincibility and immortality of righteousness. He is the God of hope; and knows that these principles are part of Himself, and are therefore inherently, defensively indestructible, and offensively omnipotent.

But He is the God of hope also in the sense that He is the Source and Inspiration of hope. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." If we would be saved from despair, our eyes and our hearts must be uplifted to "the God of hope"; our feet must be set in the paths of "the God of hope"; our efforts must be energized by "the God of hope"; and all our interests must be guaranteed and insured against loss by "the God of hope". Can we say it: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God"? "O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the saviour therefor in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not."

II.

Now that we have made an opening in this densely packed cluster, we may get a little bunch of luscious grapes from the stem: what may we expect "the God of hope" to do for us?—"Fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

Everyone who really depends in any measure upon God has some degree of faith; and faith is a fundamental, and comprehensive, and manifold grace. As a lifetime of happiness may be involved in one's marriage vows; as wide acres of rich estates may be wrapped up in a parchment deed; as the harvest of a continent may, potentially, lie in a single kernel of wheat; as the vitalizing energy of the ruler of the day is concentrated in a single sunbeam,—so faith is a bit of the eternal morning; a seed that will blossom in immortal fields; an instrument which insures possession of an inheritance incorruptible; a certificate of marriage to the Prince of Peace Who is the King of Glory. And the God of hope will show us what wealth we have in our faith. He will put a difference between the believer and the unbeliever, as He put a difference between Goshen and Egypt when "all the children of Isreal had light in their dwellings".

One of the treasures of faith which the God of hope will disclose is peace. What is peace? We say it is the opposite of war, or conflict, or contention. Yes; but there is a peace of which the natural man never even dreams. It is more than the absence of war; more than accord with one's circumstances; more than good-will among men; it is more than rest of spirit and quietude of mind. This peace is positive in character. It is not acquiescence, but acclamation; not concurrence but contentment; not resignation to the divine will merely, but delight in the divine plan and purpose; not only assurance of immunity from trouble, but an unwavering certitude of ultimate moral victory. The peace which awaits development and assertion in our faith is the flower of a growing trust; the fruit of fellowship with the God of hope, as all the flowers of the earth are born of commerce with the sunshine and the dew.

But when faith has blossomed into peace, peace matures into joy. We are to find joy as we found peace, "in believing". Communion with the God of hope

will make it a joyous thing to believe. You have thought of faith as the companion of tribulation, as a candle to burn at midnight, rather than as a harp or tabret to make noon's welkin ring with melody. The text means that we are not to believe in the God of hope as we believe in the dentist or the surgeon,—reluctantly and for the relief of pain. The rather, we are to believe in Him as the bride believes in the bridegroom; as a nation believes in its champion and defender, as Israel revelled in its confidence in David.

But the "all joy and peace" with which we are to be "filled", bespeaks the joy that springs in all weathers, and a peace that survives all circumstances. Yes, the joy and peace belonging to the saved sinner, a joy and peace which springs from the assurance of personal salvation. But that is not "all joy and peace". Can we survey the affairs of society, of the nation, of the world, as they affect us in all life's relationships with the same joyous confidence we feel in respect to our soul's salvation? Is our faith of such dimensions as to comprehend our personal needs only, or does it link us to the God of hope, and enable us joyously and confidently to anticipate the triumph of righteousness everywhere? We are not, indeed, filled with all joy and peace in believing unless we are able to leave the whole world in the hands of the God of hope.

III.

But let us take still another little bunch from this cluster. This joyous confidence is to blossom into an abounding hope. Whoever heard of an "abounding hope"? We have thought of hope as like the flickering candle. We have said, "While there is life there is hope"; and by hope we mean an emotion but one degree cheerier than despair. But that is not the hope which commerce with "the God of hope" inspires. What are the constituents of hope? Faith, peace, joy. Having these we may abound in hope.

A healthy Christian spirit should be characterized always by an abounding hope; and perhaps never in its history did this world need the ministry of an abounding hope more than it does to-day. Surely the true Christian has an unparalleled opportunity to show the virility and value of his faith! Whoever else is downhearted, let it never be said that the children and the companions of the God of hope despair of the triumph of righteousness. It were a dishonour to our Lord, and a comfort to our spiritual foes, were we to allow ourselves to despond, or even to doubt.

IV.

And now we come to the stem upon which all these rich fruits of which we have been speaking depend: "Through the power of the Holy Ghost". How often do we think of power as expressing itself in hope? We have thought of the power of the Holy Ghost as manifesting itself in certain great deeds; and yet is it not perfectly obvious that nothing short of omnipotence can be hopeful in certain circumstances? We shall be able to abound in hope only as the power of the God of hope dwells in us.

Our hope will abound only as we are able to see what God sees. And illumination requires power. To be hopeful we must have the light of truth. What dense darkness obtains in some quarters! In the light of God's revealed truth we shall see that "all things work together for good to them that love God". The servant of the man of God in Dothan saw only the Syrian hosts surrounding the city, and cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?", to which Elisha answered with a prayer that the young man's eyes might be opened. However dark the day, the chariots of fire are always with us; albeit there are some so blind they cannot see the fire! But that is not surprising, for God is light, and they cannot see Him! Notwithstanding, "the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints". And if our eyes are opened by the power of the Holy Ghost, we shall abound in hope.

Such a hope, however, depends always upon our inward state, and not upon our circumstances; and this can be maintained only by the power of the Holy Ghost: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son". "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

Lesson LXIII.

December 14th, 1924.

HEZEKIAH'S GOOD REIGN—II. Kings, Chapters 18-20.

These chapters are particularly fruitful in spiritual teaching: they are like an orchard of closely planted trees, the branches of every one of which are weighted with luscious fruit.

I. The Text of This Biographical Sketch. It is contained in the first eight verses of the eighteenth chapter. What follows is an elaboration of the statement that Hezekiah "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did."

1. Hezekiah destroyed the symbols of false religions. Chap. 18:4. Righteousness may be, and in some cases, must be, destructive as well as constructive. We can cleave to that which is good only as we abhor that which is evil. The only safe attitude is an offensive attitude toward evil. 2. He evinced a passion for truth and reality by his action in breaking in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made. That which was designed to be only a means to an end had been made an end itself; and that which had proved a means of salvation of Israel became an occasion of stumbling to a later generation. Hezekiah called it "Nehushtan"—a piece of brass. It is possible still to make the very ordinances of God's house but pieces of brass. 3. Hezekiah trusted the Lord (v. 5). "Without faith it is impossible to please God". 4. He clave to the Lord (v. 6). 5. He enjoyed the divine Presence and favour: the Lord was with him. 6. He lived prosperously and victoriously.

II. Hezekiah's Story Shows How a Man Whose Course is Generally Right May Err in Certain Particulars.

1. The story of Israel's apostasy and resultant captivity is repeated here as a parenthesis (vs. 9-12), in order that it may be set in contrast with Judah's experience, "because"—I (v. 12). 2. Hezekiah apparently was filled with terror at the remembrance of Judah's fate; and capitulated to the enemy (vs. 13-16). Thus even great men have their hours of weakness.

III. This Inspired Record of a Good Man's Life Shows That it is God's Way to Judge Life as a Whole. Hence What Follows:

The insolence of the enemy (vs. 19-30) is comparable to the assaults of our spiritual foes.

1. He sought to (a) undermine the people's confidence. Nothing is more certain to defeat an army than the destruction of its morale. So, too, when men loose faith, they loose everything. (b) The enemy identified God with idolatry (v. 22). The high places which Hezekiah had removed were places of idols and not of the true God. Thus the Devil tries always to persuade men to judge Christianity by its counterfeits. (c) He vaunts his own power (vs. 23 and 24; 33-35); (d) claims divine authority for his assault (v. 25); (e) lays siege to all the people (vs. 27-32); (f) promises plenty to those who will surrender to him (vs. 31-32). 2. The people were eminently wise in refusing to answer (v. 36). It is dangerous always to parley with the enemy. 3. Hezekiah revealed his true character when he betook himself to prayer (chap. 19: 1, 2). Character is tested by the emergencies of life. 4. He then received a "thus saith the Lord" to set over against the word of Assyria's king; and that word was a promise of victory. The Bible has a voice for those who pray. 5. How victory came: Rabshakeh had boasted of the greatness of Assyria's hosts; and challenged Hezekiah to find riders for two thousand horses, which he mockingly promised to

give him (v. 35). One angel of the Lord was enough to account for all the hosts of Assyria. Why should any believer fear when it is written, "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"! IV. **Hezekiah Further Revealed His Character in His Personal Sorrow.** Some men display heroic qualities in public life, who privately are the worst of cowards.

1. Hezekiah meets his private difficulties as he had met his public duties,—with prayer. When sickness came he prayed unto the Lord. 2. Hezekiah believed in a miracle-working God. (vs. 8-11.)

V. **Hezekiah's Record, Like That of Every Other Good Man, Notwithstanding His Many Virtues, is Replete with Warnings.** Chapter twenty, particularly verses twelve to the end, should be read with II Chronicles, chapter thirty-two, verses twenty-four to the end, particularly noting II Chronicles, 32: 31.

1. The miracle of his healing gave him abundant opportunity to glorify God, as every blessing received from the hand of the Lord is intended to do. 2. But Hezekiah allowed his heart to be lifted up with pride; and "did not render again according to the benefit done unto him." So deceitful is the heart of man, that even God's best gifts are put to evil uses. 3. Instead of telling what God had done, Hezekiah proudly showed the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon of his own wealth and glory.

THE MONTHLY COMMUNION SERVICE.

On account of the Massey Hall meeting, the Monthly Communion Service will be held at the close of the morning service, December 7th. In the early part of the service a number of candidates will be baptized.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

Forty years ago (December 12th, 1884), under the leadership of Alexander Grant, the then Superintendent of Home Missions, with Mrs. Wm. McMaster of this church in the Chair, the Women's Baptist Home Missionary Society was organized in the parlor of this church. Next Friday (December 12th), on the invitation of the Jarvis Street Mission Circle, the Women's Home Mission Board will hold, in the auditorium of this church, a **Commemorative Service** at 2.30 p.m., to which everyone in the church, young and old, is invited. The Women's Mission Circles and Young Women's Circles, and all the young people of other churches (men are included in this invitation), are also invited. We want all the women, young and old, to be here to welcome our guests.

Missionaries will be on the platform; Board members will be in the choir seats; minutes of the first meeting for organization will be read; messages from the very few still living who were present at that first meeting will be read; greetings will be given from the Superintendent of Home Missions; there will be a comparative statement of the work then and now; history reviewed; and at the close, a time of reconsecration of ourselves to the great work of winning Canada for Christ. At the close, everyone will have an opportunity of seeing the room where the organization took place, which has now become precious to us as the prayer room.

In the evening, while we wish all the women present, for the special benefit of the young people of our churches, the Mission Band children, men, and others, who could not come in the afternoon, there will be a programme, demonstrating the work of our Missions in the city. Andrew McClowsky, of Royce Ave. Mission, will play the violin; the children of John Street Mission will demonstrate the teaching given there; and our new missionaries will speak. At the close of the evening service three Russian converts will be baptized.

All those who can remain from the afternoon to the evening meeting will be served with hot tea and coffee by the ladies of Jarvis Street; but are requested to bring their own sandwiches, as it is impossible for the ladies of Jarvis Street to provide for an indeterminate number.

SUNDAY EVENING AT MASSEY HALL.

The third sermon in the series on "The Adventures of a Modern Young Man"—"What Use He Made of His Fortune"—will be delivered by the Pastor.