

# The Gospel Witness

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.

IN THE INTEREST OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH, BY JARVIS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, TORONTO, CAN., AND SENT FOR \$2.00 PER YEAR (UNDER COST), POSTPAID, TO ANY ADDRESS, 5c. PER SINGLE COPY

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

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

Address correspondence: The Gospel Witness, 130 Gerrard Street E., Toronto.

Vol. 3.

TORONTO, JANUARY 8th, 1925.

No. 35

## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

### "STARTING FOR HOME."

(The Sixth Sermon in a Series on "The Adventures of a Modern Young Man").

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis St. Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 28th, 1924.  
(Stenographically reported)

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."—Luke 15: 20.



WE HAVE already seen how this young man obtained his independence, how he demanded of his father that he should give to him his portion of goods. We have followed him in the exercise of that liberty; and have observed that he used all his powers to put the greatest possible distance between himself and his father; that he used his fortune by dissipating it; and received no equivalent for his expenditure, but came, at last, to utter bankruptcy; and tried then, apparently, to forget his father's house, and to content himself with a mere animal existence, to adapt himself to the ways of a far country to which he was not born.

Then last Sunday we observed how "he came to himself",—that sin is an abnormality, a species of madness; that a man who crowds God out of his life is without a sound mind—though he be a doctor of philosophy; and we observed something of the operation of that mind as he resolved to turn his face toward home.

And now a word of explanation before I come to an exposition of the pregnant words of our text. The Lord Jesus was the greatest psychologist this world has ever seen. In the nature of the case He must have been so; for He who made man's mind knows its nature and constitution, how to open it, how to unlock its fast-closed doors. And in this story of the Prodigal, there is a world of true psychology. Lest any should misunderstand, let me once again assert, that salvation is of grace through faith,—altogether of grace; and this young man discovered that in the far country the principle of grace was unknown: it was foreign to the idiom of that country. Nobody gave anything away; and when he came back he was incapable of understanding how anyone could give anything away, he had been so long a stranger to grace. I repeat, salvation is of grace through faith, which means that salvation is altogether the work of God from beginning to end. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Foundation, and the Top stone—He is everything: salvation is of the Lord.

But that does not preclude the Lord's calling into exercise all the faculties of the mind when saving a soul; it does not mean that He imposes His will

upon yours, that He does violence to the constitution of the mind. He Who made the mind knows the elements which compose it; and the laws which govern its operation; He knows, therefore, how to open the understanding. And it is none the less a work of grace because He comes to the darkened soul like the rising of the sun, like the dawning of the day, awakening the soul naturally, and yet supernaturally, to the God who made it,—even as the flowers open to the morning sun.

## I.

Examine this story and you will see, first of all, that there is here a sharp—I want you to think with me this evening—A SHARP DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN AN ATTITUDE OF MIND, AND AN ACT OF THE WILL. Here is a man of changed mind. That is what repentance means, literally, a change of mind. And this man has changed his mind. First of all, he desires his independence. All the faculties of the mind consenting, he assumes that paradise, for him, is to be found within the exercise of his own will: "Let me have my own way, and life will be worth while!" There is not a man or woman here who has not said the same thing;—to be absolutely free, to work out one's own desires without restraint or hindrance, this we have foolishly imagined would be the highest happiness. You will see the same tendency in the little child of three or four years of age, and (in human nature at every stage of development) until one comes to manhood's estate.

But this young man has been permitted to test his own philosophy of life; he has been allowed to have his own way; and he has proved the futility of it. He has discovered that it requires more skill to spend a fortune than to get it. What would you do with a million dollars? You think you could spend it wisely, don't you? I have an idea I could. I have my programme all made out. If anyone has a million, pass it on! You say the same. But, alas! a thousand ruined lives proclaim the fact that when people are permitted to have their own way, they discover that the exercise of their own will brings them always to disaster. That is what this man found—utter, absolute, bankruptcy. That is all; there was nothing left, he had received nothing in return for his fortune; he was personally bankrupt, and so was the country of his adoption: "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."

But now observe, after having attempted to adjust himself to a life that was separated from his father; having tried to content himself on the plane of the physical with a mere animal existence; having tried to satisfy his triple nature with husks that could feed only a body; having tried to live as an animal, in the hope that he would die like an animal, he at length discovered that there was something within him that required another kind of food, and that would not die, even when he wanted it to die. Something within him awoke. "He came to himself"—became of another mind entirely. He changed his mind. His understanding was enlightened; and he saw three things.

First of all he said in effect, "The great desideratum, the great good is to get back into relationship to my father. I know that; and in order to that, I must confess to my father; and, further, I here and now definitely resolve that so I will do. I will arise and go to my father." Do you see that point?—He had a clear mental apprehension of a course to be taken in order to get home. But he is still in the far country as hungry as ever! Some people are like that here to-night. You have had your own way, but you have discovered, as he did, that it does not pay. You have come to the same kind of bankruptcy; you have tried everything—and here is where you are to-night. Scores of people have said the same thing to me: "I have no doubt, sir, whatever, that it is the right way to live, that I must get back into right relationship with God somehow." I don't need to argue that point. You are not infidels. You who are unconverted, you are not irreligious people, or you would not be here. You know very well God is above you; and that if life is to be complemented, completed, rounded out, if the divine purpose is to be realized, then somehow or another, sometime or another, *you must get back to God*. The understanding, so far is enlightened. And there is a man or woman, perhaps many men and women, here, who say in their hearts "Amen!" to what I say. "I know it is all true, sir, I never shall be right until I get back to God." So far so good; but as yet you have not actually returned to your Father.

Another thing: It is perfectly clear in your mind that life has been a wretched failure; and that *there is no separating one's self from the record of the past without an acknowledgment of it*. "I have to confess it," the man

says. If I were to sit down and talk with you now you would confess it to me. You would say, "I have no controversy with you, sir, on that point. I admit it. Save your breath, you need not argue with me, I have failed; I don't pretend to anything else; I know I ought to get back to God; and I ought to tell Him so. I ought to say to Him, 'I have sinned.' In my deepest spiritual consciousness I know it; and I ought to bow my knee before Him this night; and to tell Him so." Praise God for an enlightened understanding, if that be so!

But I want you to go a step further with me. Many of you will say to-night, "That is all true, sir; and what is more, I am going to do that very thing. I will arise and go to my father". *You are going to be a Christian some time?* "Certainly I am." You are going to face this sin question sometime, and put it in the grave of Christ? "Without doubt, sir, I cannot afford to ignore that. All that is true, I will arise and go to my father." That is a mental attitude, though; and you are not saved. What next? Oh, mark the clear distinction which our text makes. This young man "came to himself"; his mind changed toward his father, toward his present life, toward his past, toward his future—changed in every respect! The direction of his will, of his intention, was changed. "I will arise". *But he was not saved thereby.* Then the Lord wraps it all up in these few words: "And he arose, and came to his father". I don't say what that is, for the moment—what is involved; but I do say that *the changed attitude of mind must issue in a definite act of the will in order to salvation.* We may have all the instruction in the world and be lost. "Lord, Lord, open to us. We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. We have had divine teaching, we have had enlightenment of mind; but we never had the act of will; we are outside of the door instead of inside."—"He arose and came to his father."

### III.

Now then, a few words of explanation as to WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THAT ACT OF THE WILL: Again, in preparation for that explanation, let me point out that whatever is involved in those words, "He arose", his objective, his destination, was not his father's house; it was not his father's table; it was not the broad expanse of his father's estate—it was *his father's person.* He came, not to a house, not to a table, not to a full storehouse, but *he came to his father;* Salvation consists in a personal relationship to God. There is a value in a creed, in a statement of faith; but subscription to a creed as such, if that be all, will not save anyone. I should be the last to underestimate the value of such subscription. You have learned the catechism; you may repeat it; you may be trained in a theological seminary, and be perfectly orthodox in your belief, and yet never be saved at all; for the reason that our creeds are of value only as they relate us to God, as they tell us the truth about God, and bring us to God. I might even say, my dear friends, that believing the Bible does not save a man. A man may intellectually subscribe to every word in that Book, and say, "I don't dispute it; I believe it from cover to cover." I told you the other day I do not like to hear people talk like that; although many make that boast. To me the Bible is the very Word of God. My contention is that one may believe all that intellectually and yet fail to find his way to the living Person of Whom this Book speaks. This young man did not stop until he came to his father. And I repeat, we shall never be saved by a mere confession of faith; we shall never be saved by observance of ordinances; we shall not be saved by going to church. All these things have their place; but the fundamental, the vital, thing, is this: "He came to his father". And we must get to our Father; we must get back to God somehow or another; we must push our way through the crowd and touch the hem of His garment, and get into personal and vital connection with God Himself, or we shall not be saved.

Well, *how can we get to the Father?* That is easily answered: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me". "I am the way, the truth, and the life". We must come to the Father through Jesus Christ the Son. There is no other way. The only God I know is Jesus Christ. "Why," you say, "is He God?" Yes; I know no other God. If He be not God we can know nothing about God; He is absolutely the only full revelation of God, and the only way to God! "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Well, then; it resolves itself into this: we must get to the Father; we must get to the Father through Christ. What does it mean, then, to arise and come to Christ? Is that not simple? What is involved in that definite act of the will? He said; "I will arise"; and then he did as he said he would: "He arose, and came to his father."

Perhaps someone will say, "Now, sir, you are going to magnify the human

will. Do you not know that the Bible says salvation is of grace through faith? Yes, I do. I know that as well as you do. But what I want to explain to you is that true faith is always an act of the will, not of the intellect. That is where many people go astray. "Oh," some man says, "I cannot think it through, sir; I don't understand; I cannot believe anything unless it is proved to me". It is all nonsense you are talking. You students are perhaps not blamed because the professors have put it into your heads that you are a little superior, and that difficulties of faith are difficulties of the intellect. They are not difficulties of the intellect at all—they are difficulties of the will! And that is why it is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned." No man is condemned for doing that which he cannot help doing, or for failing to do that which he finds it impossible to do. If faith were the result, merely, of intellectual processes; or if unbelief were caused by a defective understanding, a gracious God would never condemn us for that. But properly understood, faith is always an act of the will.

What did the young man say? "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." You see he believed that he would be better off by going away from home; and believing that he would be better off, he acted upon the basis of his faith; and he went into a far country. How did he go? By a deliberate and definite act of his own will. How did he get back? In exactly the same way.

Let me make it very simple: I called this afternoon to see one of our dear sisters who is in the hospital to undergo a serious operation; and it was a great benediction to my own soul as I saw her so peaceful and so happy in the Lord; and confident, too, that the Lord in His mercy had brought to her side a skilful physician and an expert surgeon. Now that young woman knew something about the doctor. I think very likely she would trust her pastor with a great many things; but I don't think she would trust him to perform a surgical operation, because she knows he does not know anything about it. She would say, "No thank you, I believe in you up to a certain point, but I don't believe in you as a surgeon; I would rather have someone who knows more about it". And she would be quite right. But knowing something about a particular surgeon, being persuaded of his skill, she said, "I know I need an operation; I believe I ought to have the operation; some day I will submit to it." But at length the day came when she said to her doctor, "I will go into the hospital to-day, and to-morrow you shall operate."

Because she had confidence in that surgeon's skill, she put her life in his hands. It would have been useless for her to say, "I have no doubt whatever that Dr. So-and-So is a very expert surgeon; and I have no doubt at all but that he could perform the operation; and I am quite sure if I had it over I should be better. I should be well. I believe all that." But we might then have said: "Well, then, why don't you go?" "Well, because—because—because"—*because you don't believe*. That is why. Such irresolution would argue that there was a reservation somewhere. Suppose you hear to-night the screech of a fire reel dashing past your house. You are not disturbed by it,—a commonplace—only someone's house is on fire. Why trouble about it? You cannot put it out. You don't know where it is; it may be five miles away. But supposing that apparatus were to come to your door, and supposing you hear someone knocking at midnight and you say, "What is the matter?" You throw up your window, and someone says, "The house is on fire." And you answer, "Are you sure? Are you quite sure? Well, how do you know?" "Why, I can see it." Would you stand there to argue about it? How long? Just long enough to be convinced of the truth of that alarm. And the moment you actually believed that your house was on fire, you would act. And if you did not act, it would prove that you did not believe. It would be of no use to say, "I believe in the fire alarm. I believe most profoundly that when a man is awakened at midnight and is told his house is on fire, he ought to get up. I believe all that." But faith of that sort would not save, my friends. How simple it is!—what you do actually believe you will act upon.

I crossed the sea a good many times during the war; and I have never enjoyed an ocean passage so much as during the war. It was especially interesting going through the submarine zone. I never felt the slightest bit disturbed. We wore our life-belts down to the dining room, then took them off and threw them over the back of the chair to be more comfortable; going up on deck we carried them with us, and put them on again. I went over on one

ship, the Arabic; and on the way back it was torpedoed. When I came back in September of that year half the Arabic crew were on the ship. They had been rescued, and put on another ship. I recognized the steward, the purser, and several others; and talked with them about their experiences.

There was one man, an old man, who had been a passenger on the Arabic when she was torpedoed. He had been in a life-boat for hours before they were picked up by a torpedo boat. He told me a story which I shall never forget. They were all assigned positions in the life-boat.—I often wondered how we would get there if the ship should blow up. But they did everything possible to insure our safety by giving us positions in the ship's life-boats. This passenger told me of his experience when the Arabic was going down. There was a woman who had a little girl; and she came out of her cabin a few minutes after the ship was struck, with her little girl by the hand, and walked up to her station at the life-boat to which she had been assigned. There was a great deal of confusion, and the little girl began to cry. Her mother said, "Don't cry, dear, don't cry. We are going to be all right. I told you you would probably have a ride in a little boat as well as a big one before we got home." And that brave woman lifted the child over the railing into the boat, and then got in herself, as though it were her daily custom—without the slightest anxiety, without any confusion at all. And he said, "Her conduct was an inspiration to the crew and everyone." That woman had implicit faith in the boat, in the crew, and in all the arrangements; and she acted upon her faith.

Now someone says, "Well, sir, I believe all that; I believe I am a sinner." Yes! "I believe that Jesus died for sinners." Yes! "I believe that He lives, and that He can and will save sinners." Yes! that is fine—but you are not saved. "Oh, I am sure the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, will cleanse from all sin." Yes! What then? "He arose". What does that mean? It means that that woman's faith meant: Here was a great ship, beautifully furnished, with great engines—a floating palace; and here was a boat that would probably carry fifty or sixty people—not any more—nothing to keep you warm, apparently nothing to feed you when you were hungry. But when the alarm was given, and this woman knew that that great palace was going down, with perfect composure she took her little girl from the great ship, and lifted her over into the small boat; then she got over into the boat herself, and leaving everything behind, committed herself, and what was more precious than life to her, her own darling child, to the keeping of that life-boat. You see, it was a case of being saved in that boat, or being lost altogether.

What does it mean to come to Christ? It means to cease from all efforts of our own, from all dependence upon anything in this world or the next but the promise of God, Who cannot lie. "I will arise"—"He arose." He got out of one boat into the other; and committed himself definitely to his father.

I have been so glad to hear of people being converted in their seats. A brother told me the other day—one of our workers who had been very zealous and active in speaking to people personally,—he had been preaching the Word—and he came to me, and told me he had had a new joy. I said, "What is it?" And he said, "Someone was saved just where he was sitting, merely from hearing the Word. Why not be saved just where you are?" "He arose, and came to his father."

I shall speak to you about "Home, Sweet Home", next Sunday. I think we will finish this series next Sunday night, when I shall try to show you there is no place like home. But listen! There is a man down there who says, "Well, sir, I will—I will—I will—I will commit myself to the Lord God". But what then? what then? "But when he was yet a great way off"—he had done all that he could; he arose; he lifted his foot and set his feet and his face toward home—"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." And the moment his father put his arms about him in the way, before he got home, he was saved! And if it be so that your will is yielded to Jesus Christ to-night, if you can say:

"Just as I am without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me,

And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,

Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come."

if you are willing to leave all in His hands, as that dear girl leaves herself in the hands of the surgeon, He will save you; He bids us yield ourselves to Him, and for time and for eternity, trust Him for our salvation. Will you arise and come to your Father?

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 post) 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

### A GREAT PRAYER CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO.

From January 25th to 28th, the Baptist Bible Union of North America will hold a great Prayer Conference in the old Moody Church, corner of Chicago and La Salle Avenues, Chicago. All over the land there are companies of people who are beseeching God to send a great revival. Great numbers of ministers who are true to the faith, and who have earnestly contended for the faith, have an ever-deepening conviction that if the tide of unbelief is to be turned back, and the old-time spiritual prosperity is to return to the churches of our beloved Denomination, there must come a spiritual revival.

Important as it is that we should display the banner that God has given to those who fear Him because of the truth, that we should, by voice and pen, combat the heresies of the day, it must be evident to all, that the only really effective Apologist for the gospel is the Holy Spirit Himself. It was God Who pleaded His own cause on Mount Carmel; and it was God Who established the truth of the resurrection, with all that that implies, on the day of Pentecost. And the men and women whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world, and who are carried away by the plausible sophistries of Modernism, will be made to bow their knee to Christ, and to confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father, only by the power of the God that answers by fire. The individual life that is Spirit-filled, and the church that is set on fire by the Holy Ghost, are indisputable evidence that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that the Bible is the Word of God.

The Baptist Bible Union is what its name implies—a union of Baptists who believe the Bible to be the Word of God. The reason for its existence also is implied in its name. There are people who are called Baptists who do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. The Baptist Bible Union is a fellowship of Baptists who are Revelationists as opposed to Rationalists, who are Trinitarians as opposed to Unitarians, who are Creationists as opposed to Evolutionists, who are Explanatists as opposed both to Remedialists and to those who believe only in the moral influence of the Atonement, who are Regenerationists as opposed to Reformationists—in a word, it is a fellowship of believers in Supernaturalism, as opposed to Naturalism, in religion.

The Baptist Bible Union, therefore, sends out this earnest call to all Baptists who can by any possibility come to Chicago for the days named, to join us in the historical Moody Church—where Moody prayed, and from which place he went forth as a flaming evangelist—to pray that God will once again visit His people by a mighty religious awakening all over this Continent.

At the time of going to press, we are unable to give the complete list of

speakers. We are hoping and praying that it may be possible for that valliant soldier of Christ so greatly beloved by scores of thousands in America and Canada, Dr. W. B. Riley, to be with us. He has not yet resumed his duties in his own church, nor will he do so, we understand, until the spring. We shall not urge him to speak, but if he is able to be with us, his presence alone, even for an hour, will be one of the mightiest possible testimonies to the power of prayer. It seems not only probable, but almost certain, that he will come back to us and to the fight for the faith, from the valley of the shadow, with his great powers, not only of mind and spirit, but of body also, unimpaired. We believe hundreds of people would travel long distances for the inspiration that will come from seeing his face in the flesh again.

One of the principal speakers at the Conference will be Dr. J. Frank Norris, of Fort Worth, Texas. We are finding that many men are becoming increasingly indifferent to the utterances of mere theorists. If we could drag some theological professors from their class-rooms, and turn them loose in the slums to test their modernistic vagaries there, it would probably do more to convince them of the emptiness and uselessness of their theories than a thousand arguments. People go to Bible conferences now to ask, "What has this man behind him? Is he discussing a theory, or has he reduced the principles of his teaching to practice? Has he put his gospel to the proof? Has his ministry been in demonstration of the Spirit and of power? Has he built anything that will stand the test of the judgment-seat of Christ?" It is the affirmative answers to these and many other questions which give authority to the ministry of a man like Dr. Norris. A great church like that of Fort Worth is not the result of evolution, nor does it come by accident, nor is it the product of the ministry of religious extremists.

We have read a story of the old horse-omnibus days in London, to the effect that a stranger, riding on the top of an omnibus Sunday morning in the neighbourhood of The Elephant And Castle, saw crowds of people all going in one direction. He asked a fellow-passenger where they were going, to which the passenger replied, "They are going to hear that 'fool Spurgeon'." The old omnibus driver overheard the remark, and turning in his seat, he said, "Sir, I have been driving on this route twenty years, and every Sunday morning, rain or shine, I see these thousands of people wending their way toward Spurgeon's Tabernacle. If Spurgeon were a fool, some of these people would have found it out before now. A great mass of people do not follow a fool very long." The story applies to others as well as to Spurgeon; and especially to the great work of the First Baptist Church, Fort Worth. If Dr. Norris were what his enemies try to persuade us he is, the multitude of people who attend his ministry in Fort Worth would have found it out before this. Wherever Dr. Norris goes, he is listened to, especially by ministers, because he has behind him a great church, which is the most convincing evidence that God is with him. Dr. Norris will give several addresses at Chicago.

Another of the principal speakers will be the Rev. Professor E. M. Keirstead, M.A., D.D., LL.D., Professor of Systematic Theology in McMaster University, Toronto. The mind of Professor Keirstead is one of the most richly furnished we have ever known. He was graduated with A.B. from the University of New Brunswick, his native Province; and later received the degree of M.A. from Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S. He studied theology under Dr. Hovey; and graduated in theology from Newton Center, Mass. He received the degree of D.D. from Acadia University, and LL.D. from St. Francis Xavier University,

Québec. Dr. Keirstead was for some years Professor of English Literature in Acadia University; and has for some years been Professor of Systematic Theology in McMaster University, Toronto.

Many years ago, before we had even met Dr. Keirstead, we met a young man in the West, who was a graduate of Acadia University. He did not boast of his University as though, irrespective of changes in the personnel of the faculty, it were the headquarters of all the virtues: he had sense enough to know that it is the principles which find their incarnations in the professors, which make a university. This young man asked the writer of this article if he had ever met Professor Keirstead, and upon receiving a negative reply, he assured us that a great treat was in store. "For", said he, "I always think of him as the man who made Jesus Christ real to me. He was Professor of English Literature; and no matter what the particular subject was, he taught it in the light of his knowledge of Christ". Years later we heard Professor Keirstead deliver an address; and we were captured at once. With all his learning, his faith in Christ is as simple as a child's. He speaks in universal terms; his God is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ Who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me", but his is also the God of the universe, to Whose will and purpose every atom is vitally related. In Dr. Keirstead's addresses at Chicago, there will be food for the whole man.

By virtue of his office as President of the Union, the writer of this article will have some part in the proceedings; and will probably deliver one or two addresses.

The following programme will be carried out as printed, only if some of the speakers invited, whose acceptance we have not yet received, are unable to come:

Sunday, January 25th: Morning, Professor E. M. Keirstead, D.D. Afternoon, Rev. T. T. Shields, D.D. Evening, Rev. J. Frank Norris, D.D.

Monday, January 26th: Afternoon, Dr. J. Frank Norris. Evening, Dr. E. M. Keirstead.

Tuesday, January 27th: Afternoon, Dr. E. M. Keirstead. Evening, Dr. T. T. Shields.

Wednesday, January 28th: Afternoon, Dr. T. T. Shields. Evening, Dr. J. Frank Norris.

All the addresses will bear upon the main subject of revival, magnifying the value of God's Word, the efficacy of the atoning blood, and the power of the Holy Spirit; and the relation of prayer to all these.

We earnestly invite Christians generally, and Baptists in particular, who can possibly come to Chicago on these dates, to join with us in sending out a call to God's people everywhere to bend all their energies, by prayer and effort, toward the promotion of a great spiritual awakening.

Further information may be obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer of the Baptist Bible Union: Miss Edith Redman, Room 340, Monon Bldg., 440 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

We shall be glad if those who cannot come to Chicago, to have these dates in mind; and earnestly invoke God's blessing upon the meetings. And also any contribution to the general work of the Baptist Bible Union will be most gratefully received.



## The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

LESSON LXVIII.

January 18th, 1926

### NEHEMIAH'S CALL—Nehemiah, Chapters 1-3.

#### I. Nehemiah's Call.

1. It came to him "in Shushan the palace." It is not often God's voice is heard in the palace. There was no room in the inn for Jesus to be born, hence the infant Saviour was cradled in a manger. And the acoustics of the stable are often more favourable to spiritual voices than of the more comfortable rooms of the inn. But though "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," grace will not be denied a hearing in the palace when God wills to choose an instrument for His purpose there. They are wise who enjoy the comforts of the palace who refuse to allow their blessings to shut their ears to spiritual voices.

2. Nehemiah found his place in a very natural way. He was not given some extraordinary vision. He only permitted his heart to ask a question concerning his less favoured brethren. Others would find opportunities for service were they not too selfish even to enquire as to others' state.

3. The tidings of the affliction and approach of his brethren filled him with sorrow and drove him to fasting and prayer. We may judge our own spiritual state by the effect upon our own spirit of news of others' reproach. We must learn to weep with those that weep before we shall be able to rejoice with those who do rejoice.

4. Nehemiah's prayer is a model. First, he remembered his own prayer. How many do? Next he prayed to a God in covenant with His people. Nothing is more confirmatory of faith than the promises of the Covenant. Of the cup of the Supper the Saviour said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." Further, Nehemiah confessed the sins of the people with his own. He then pleaded the promises of the Covenant.

#### II. Nehemiah's Response to the Divine Call.

1. It was a testimony to the quality of his own faith that he was invariably cheerful about his work. Is cheerfulness a habit or an accident with us? Is it continuous or occasional?

2. It was a testimony to the depth of his religious sympathies that news of Zion's sorrows made personal gladness impossible and afflicted him with a grief so poignant that it could not be disguised. Our characters may be tested by an examination of the sources from which our joys and sorrows spring.

3. Nehemiah did not answer the king's question till he had prayed (ch. 2:4.)

4. With confidence in God he made request to the king and was not disappointed. All who would raise money to rebuild Jerusalem should learn to pray much before soliciting subscriptions.

5. The melancholy refrain of the whole Bible is here repeated (ch. 2:10). God never sets before His people an open door without there being many adversaries.

6. Nehemiah sought a clear understanding of the magnitude of his task (vs. 12-16). It is instructive to view the ruin sin has wrought. It is no light thing to repair the wastage of sin. Nothing will so humble us, whether as preachers, or teachers, or Christian workers in other spheres, as an examination of the nature and extent of our task; nor will anything do more to drive us to our knees.

7. Nehemiah encouraged others by the relation of his own experience of God's leading: "Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me." It is absolutely indispensable to any effective spiritual leadership that we have a personal experience of what God will do for those who trust and obey Him.

8. There is no better answer for the adversary than a confession of faith in God.

9. The tenth chapter is a record of a right division of labor. Observe the phrases, "Next unto him," "Next unto them," "After them repaired," Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece," "Another piece," etc., etc. These all suggest that Nehemiah was as wise as Gyra and succeeded in getting others

to help him, each building his "piece." Only thus can God's work be done. Let us remember that the Lord of the parable "gave to every man his work."

10. The work was done by the common people for the most part: "Their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." It is ever so.

### TWO GREAT MEETINGS.

It is doubtful whether, even in the long history of Jarvis Street Church, two such extraordinary meetings have been held as were held New Year's Eve and New Year's morning. Wednesday evening the meeting began at nine o'clock; and by ten o'clock the lecture hall was crowded, every seat being occupied. A spirit of prayer was upon the people; and without any cessation, the tide of prayer flowed on until about ten minutes to twelve, when a hymn of praise was sung; and then the last five minutes of the year was spent in silent prayer, while the New Year was hailed with songs of rejoicing.

Ten-thirty was the hour for the New Year's morning meeting; but so many came at ten o'clock that the meeting was begun, and by a few minutes after half-past ten, the lecture hall was again packed. There was some singing; but it was evident that the people had come with a desire to pray, and prayer continued unceasingly till eleven-forty-five. The Pastor then spoke briefly, referring to the New Year's motto for 1924, "Thou shalt see greater things than these", and to the abundant fulfilment of that promise in the church's experience during the year. He then gave as the motto for this year, II Corinthians 3: 5: "Our sufficiency is of God".

As soon as testimony was called for, people rose all over the building, as many as four and five being on their feet at once. This continued till far past half-past twelve; so that the Pastor was obliged to ask all those who would like to give a testimony to stand. A great company responded to this invitation, and remained standing as one by one they expressed their gratitude for blessings past, and expressed their confidence that larger blessing was in store. This great New Year's meeting closed with the singing of one of Jarvis Street's favorite hymns, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name".

### THE BIBLE SCHOOL ENTERTAINMENTS.

For some time the Christmas festivals of the various departments of the Bible School have been in progress. And how wonderful they have been!—every department bigger than the whole Bible School was before. The B. D. Thomas Hall was packed for the Cradle Roll, Beginners', and Primary Departments' supper, and so was the great lecture hall for the entertainment following. The same was true of the Junior Department.

At this writing we have just come upstairs from the reunion of the Young People's Department. What a night it has been!—the B. D. Thomas Hall was crowded in every part. At the entertainment, if such it may be called, afterward, we were lifted to the heavenly places. The knowledge that the overwhelming majority of that great company of young men and women have come into the church—most of them being converted—within the last two years, was an inspiration which led us to feel that nothing was impossible.

The quality of life, too, is proving a perpetual surprise!—young men and women of whose talents we had no knowledge, taking their place and of their own thinking, telling us of the joy of the Lord. We have never seen a happier band of young people. It reminded us of the story of the prodigal—"They began to be merry". The young people of Jarvis Street have certainly begun to be merry. May they never cease their merriment until they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb in the celestial city,—and then their merriment will last for ever. Throughout the entire evening, a high spiritual tone was maintained; and the great company rejoiced before the Lord very much as David must have rejoiced before the ark.

### THE RESIGNATION OF REV. W. L. MCKAY, B.A.

Some time ago, Mr. McKay, who for about four years has been Superintendent of our Parliament Street Branch, sent his resignation to the Deacons' Board, informing us that he had responded to the call of the West; and

expected to take up pastoral duties there. Mr. McKay has done a great work in Parliament Street Branch. He is one of the truest and noblest men we have ever met. He is a burning and a shining light; but he is not a sky-rocket; he does not gallop to his goal; but steadily and faithfully, day by day, he presses forward the Lord's work. While the Sunday Schools of other denominations in the Parliament Street district have been steadily declining, the Parliament Street School has not only maintained its strength, but it has slowly increased, so that we have an attendance there of about three hundred.

Mr. McKay has felt a desire to settle in a regular pastorate where all the duties of the pastoral office would be his. We congratulate the Medicine Hat church on securing for their pastor such an able minister of the New Testament. Mr. McKay leaves the service of the Jarvis Street Church with the confidence and affection of the Pastor and deacons, and the entire membership. Had the Parliament Street Branch afforded promise of development into the kind of work for which Mr. McKay is so admirably fitted, every effort would have been made to retain his services. He will be followed to his new field by the prayers of the whole church.

### THREE GREAT FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS.

We believe that a church, like a business, should periodically take stock. The month of January will be "stock-taking" month in Jarvis Street. It is, of course, impossible accurately to measure a church's spiritual progress; but so far as it is possible, Jarvis Street will attempt this during January.

The three meetings of next week—Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday—will be fellowship meetings. The Bible lecture will be omitted Thursday evening. An effort will be made to secure the presence of every member of the church at one, at least, of these three meetings—all of them if possible, but one at least. At every meeting time will be taken for prayer; but at these particular meetings, special emphasis will be laid upon testimony. We shall hope to hear, in a brief sentence, from hundreds of our members concerning their hope in Christ. There will be hundreds of others who have not yet courage to speak in public, who will be present, and by their presence, testify to their continued walk with the Lord.

A census of those present will be taken at each meeting; and every member not attending one of these three meetings will be personally visited within the two weeks following. All this will lead up to what we confidently expect will be the greatest Communion Service ever held in Jarvis Street, on the first Sunday evening in February.

We are grateful to God for the large additions He has given us during the last few years; but we are more concerned for quality than quantity, and we feel that it is necessary that both the sheep and the lambs of the flock should be shepherded. Moreover, membership in Jarvis Street Church must mean more than a name on a book: it must mean a vital, present, Christian experience. We ask the prayerful co-operation of every member of the church in this great effort at spiritual "stock-taking", in order that we may be prepared for such revision of the church roll as this stock-taking may show to be necessary.

### LAST SUNDAY.

The first Sunday of the New Year was a day of great blessing. Notwithstanding the heavy snow of the morning, nearly eight hundred were present in the Bible School; and at the close of the morning service, in response to the appeal for members of the church, and Christians generally, to dedicate themselves to the work of personal evangelism for the year, hundreds came forward, filling the front of the church and all the aisles; and large numbers of others who could not move from their seats, indicated the same resolution by raising their hands.

In the evening, there was a great congregation. At the Communion service following, every section of the ground floor of the church was well occupied, though not in all parts crowded. The Pastor gave the Hand of Fellowship to nineteen, five of whom had been baptized during the first service.

**DORCAS SOCIETY, THURSDAY.**

The Dorcas Society will meet Thursday afternoon at two o'clock for work, and the Dorcas tea at six-thirty. The Pastor and deacons have requested the Dorcas Society to permit the use of this occasion around the tables to afford an opportunity to the members of the church to say, "Farewell" to Rev. W. L. and Mrs. McKay. We expect there will be an especially large attendance on this account. All the gentlemen invited to tea.

**JANUARY, WITNESS MONTH****THREE MONTHS FOR TWENTY-FIVE CENTS**

One of our readers has made a suggestion which we believe has great possibilities. Our suggestion that *The Witness* should be sent as a Christmas present met with a surprising response. Out of this came the suggestion that hundreds of *Witness* readers would probably be glad to assist in extending our circulation if a low rate were quoted for a brief period.

We have gone into the matter very carefully; and are now prepared to offer *The Gospel Witness* to new subscribers for a period of three months for twenty-five cents. Twenty-five cents will not pay for thirteen copies of *The Witness*; but we believe that the most effective way to advertise *The Witness* is to let people read it for themselves. We do not want dissatisfied subscribers; but rather, subscribers who have an appetite for the kind of things published in our paper. We appeal, therefore, to all our readers in Canada, and the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere, to send us as many names as possible, and with each name, twenty-five cents. For this we will send *The Witness* beginning with the first issue in February, and continuing to the last issue of April.

We believe there are many readers of *The Witness* who will be willing to invest one, two, five, or ten dollars in sending *The Witness* to their friends. To all such, we suggest that you make a selection of as many friends as you can afford to subscribe for at twenty-five cents for three months: send us the names and addresses, and we will do the rest. Another way—which would involve more labour, but which would probably be more effective—would be to solicit your friends to subscribe for a three months' trial of *The Witness* at twenty-five cents for the three months. But use any method you like—only send us in hundreds of names during the month of January.

Our plan is not to begin sending *The Witness* until the first issue of February. It would not be possible to send them out as the names come in throughout the month, for that would involve an enormous amount of book-keeping. Our plan is to use the month of January to secure subscribers; and that such subscriptions shall begin with the first issue in February, and terminate with the last issue of April. In that way, we shall be able to deal with all these new subscriptions in a solid block, which will involve much less labour in the office. We further purpose, in the first issue of February, to put a notice which will explain that *The Witness* is being sent to hundreds of people for the first time on trial for three months. At the end of March, we shall write every one of these trial subscribers, notifying them that their subscriptions will terminate with the last issue of April; and urging them to become regular subscribers.

Who will send us the first list of trial subscribers at twenty-five cents for the three months, February to April?