

# 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

### "THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME."

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

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis Street Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 4, 1925.

(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. "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. "But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: "And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—Luke 15: 20-24.



SOME time ago I spoke in several places on the latter part of this parable—the prodigal's brother. And some good friends, a number of them, have wanted that address in print. So, to complete our series, I will speak on that subject next Sunday evening, in order that it may follow this sermon in *The Gospel Witness*.

I received a letter yesterday from a French pastor in Switzerland, saying, "We are enjoying the prodigal series very much"; another from a French pastor in France; and another letter from the editor of a great journal in England, asking permission to reprint The Witness sermons occasionally. I should like, therefore, to put into this evening's message, a word of greeting to the thousands of readers whom we never see; and send to them your best wishes, with mine, that this year may be to them in the truest sense, a "New Year"—filled with the happiness that comes from a consciousness of the divine favour. I should like to send this message also to our readers in every province in Canada, and to practically every state in the Union, and to Mexico, and New Zealand, and Australia, to France, and Switzerland, and Great Britain, to the number of readers we now have in Ireland, and to our missionary readers in China and in India. Some of our friends have written and said, "When we are serving in isolated districts where there are few people, the atmosphere of a great congregation comes to us in The Witness and we rejoice."

in worshipping with you." And I want them to know through the stenographic report of this service, that we think of them, and pray for them—as we do at all our services.

This evening I shall bring to a conclusion our study of this story of the prodigal, and try, I can only try—for no one can adequately describe the experiences of a soul's coming home—but I shall try to tell you what awaits the returning prodigal when he comes back to his father's house. We have seen him gaining his own independence, and exercising it by going into the far country; squandering his fortune and obtaining nothing in return; discovering he was out of place in that far-distant land; and coming at last to himself. Last Sunday we saw him putting into effect his resolution: "He arose and came to his father."

### I.

And what after that? Observe HOW DIVINE GRACE MEETS THE SINNER'S SURRENDERED WILL. "He arose and came to his father"; but when he had done his utmost, he was still "a great way off". The utmost power of the human will does not carry us very far on the way home. All that a man can do to make himself acceptable to God leaves him "yet a great way off." He has no fitness whatever to come into the Father's presence; nor has he strength in himself for the long journey. When men have done all that they can do, they are "yet a great way off." "Behold," said Naaman, "I thought that the prophet would come out." But when Naaman had done all his thinking, he was "yet a great way off" from God's way of cleansing a leper. By the foolishness of preaching it has pleased God to save them that believe; but the world by wisdom is "yet a great way off" from God: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The Psalmist was wiser than Naaman when he said, "I hate vain thought." And the word "vain" in our version is in italics. It is not in the original. What the Psalmist really said was, "I hate thoughts, but thy law do I love."—The thought of God, the Word of God, the will of God, the way of God—"I love that"—said he.

"He was yet a great way off." And some of you last Sunday night made up your minds to come home. The words of that hymn that the choir sang, perhaps, have been in your mind all the week:

"Out in the wilderness wild and drear,  
Sadly I've wandered for many a year,  
Driven by hunger and filled with fear:  
I will arise and go:  
Backward with sorrow my steps to trace  
Seeking my heavenly Father's face,  
Willing to take but a servant's place,  
I will arise and go."

And you thought you did arise; and you started for the Father's house. Yet you found yourself "a great way off." Oh, let us complete the story: "While he was yet a great way off his father saw him." "Thou understandest," said the Psalmist, "my thought afar off." God understands our thinking: our seeking after Him, the measure of our desire, the strength of our resolution, and the limitations of our own powers; and while we are "yet a great way off," He sees us.

Now, if I were to sit down to talk to you this evening, to enquire as to your spiritual state, I should have to listen to what you have to say. But when you meet with God, you have not to tell Him anything, for He sees the

end from the beginning; He knows the thoughts and the intents of the heart. And I remind you, my brother, that as you turn your face toward God, you are turning toward One of Whom it is written, "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." From Him no secrets are hid. Blessed be His name! He knows when a poor sinner wants to come home and cannot; He knows when a poor sinner wants to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and is crying out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him"; and He understands us to-night. And he met him in the way! Grace does not wait to manifest its power until we get to heaven.

How many religious people there are who say, "It is presumptuous, sir, for any man to say, 'I am saved!'" How can we know it until we actually get to the glory? I have started in the way; I am resolved to continue my course; and by and by I hope to see—(that is what the Methodists used to say, I don't know whether or not they say it now—but they used to say it) I hope to see the end of a praying life." As though this seeking after God were an experiment; and that we could never be really sure of salvation, until we get yonder within the gates of pearl. But mark this, will you? "His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran." He did not wait for him to come all the way, but met him in the way. What is the gospel? "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus—or, Jesus as Lord—and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here! Now!—this moment, where you are sitting.

"His father saw him." You cannot take God by surprise. You will never find that He is not looking from the window; you will never find Him unready to receive you; He will see you, no matter how dark the night. And He will run to meet you, no matter how far away you are: "While he was yet a great way off." How was the measure of that separation spanned? Not by the prodigal's will, but by his father's running and meeting him in the way—at the only place where the prodigal could meet him. That is how God saves the soul. He will meet the sinner the moment he surrenders his will and says, "I will arise and go to my Father." For the moment he does actually arise and surrender his will, his Father sees him; and He is at his side with all the powers of His saving grace, and saves him there and then with His eternal salvation.

"And fell on his neck and kissed him." What is salvation? It is not coming to church; it is not intellectually subscribing to the Bible, although that is a very good thing in its place; it is not making a religious profession. The soul is saved when the arms of the Lord God are put about him. "He fell on his neck"; and from that moment that son was safe from all harm: between him and everything, and every person, that could injure him, was the strong right arm of his father. What is it to be saved? It is to come into the almighty grip of Jesus Christ, Who is the only God we know. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is

able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." When grace meets the returning sinner in the way, he is saved for ever.

I should like to give this as my confession. I never expect to be any safer than I am at this moment. I am being saved, I trust; growing up into Christ in some measure, I hope. But some day when we awake, we shall be like Him; the work of grace will be perfected. Yet we are saved with an everlasting salvation the moment the arms of a gracious God are put about us. And that is what happens the moment we surrender our wills,—He will run and meet us. Before there was any change in his outward state—while he was still in his rags, and still had no shoes on his feet; while he was still hungry; and while he was still the poor bankrupt beggar that the residents of the far country had known—while there was absolutely no outward change at all, he was as safe as when later he was found in royal apparel in his princely father's house. And the moment a poor sinner yields his will to Christ, he has eternal life: "And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

## II.

Now, I shall have to get you to use your imaginations this evening. Even had I time, I am sure I could find no language in which to express the gladness and the glory here described. It may be there are some here this evening who say, "Well, sir, I have come, but I really do not know how to pray." So often I have knelt with a seeking soul, and, having prayed, I have said to that seeking soul, "You pray; pray for yourself." And oh, how falteringly, how stammeringly, that soul prays the first time!—as though God were very critical of our prayers, as though there were no chance of our prayers being answered unless they are very precisely and accurately phrased. This young man came home with a ready-made prayer. He formulated it in the far country, and said it over to himself again and again and again, that he might be able to repeat it in his father's house. And he said, "When I get home I will say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'" And when he came into his father's presence he began his prayer just exactly as he said he would: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son—". And then his father broke in. (I think if the Lord were leading our prayer meetings sometimes He would stop some of our prayers. He would say, "You don't need to make it as long as that. Say 'Amen' and sit down." I think that is what He would say to a great many of us, "Say 'Amen' and sit down.")

The boy came home; and he began his prayer, but before he finished his father said, "I have heard quite enough of that, my son." To his servants he said, "Quick! bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." It was the cry of the heart the father heard, not the words of the lips. So then, learn this, that when the sinner comes home, *grace provides him with God's best*. I don't know why it is, but I confess that I have a liking for the best things here. I cannot get them very often. But when I go into a store, and I want something, they look at me for a little while; and I don't know why, but they always take down the most expensive things they have in the store. Some good friend said to me one day, "It is the way you walk." But, whatever the reason, there it is: the high-priced thing, the best article—and I want it. But I have to say, "No, thank you." And then sometimes they look at one another as though they would say, "I wonder if this man does not want what we have, or can he not afford to pay so much?" And then sometimes they bring down the second-

class, and the third-class. That is how we all go shopping, isn't it? Would it not be a happy experience to be able to have the best of everything—to know no limit at all, to be able to go into any store and say, "I want the very best you have," and pay out the money—to have the best of everything? Well, that is what the religion of the Lord Jesus offers—God's best:

Some dear friends spoke to me on this matter of baptism some time ago—I forget whether they were Methodists, Presbyterians, or Anglicans. I don't know what you are, but take it anyhow—they said, "Well now, after all, Mr. Shields, we are all going to the same place, are we not? It does not make any difference what church we belong to." To which I replied, "Well, I hope we are all going the same way; but I have seen trains before now all going the same way, with first, second, and third-class coaches; but I prefer to ride in the first-class car." Now, don't you want to go to heaven, Pullman? Don't you want to go first-class? Don't you want to have God's best? He has His best for those who will yield to Him, who will surrender all to Him; and when we come with a surrendered will, and an open heart, having abandoned ourselves to Him and separated ourselves from all others, His answer to our cry is, "Bring forth the best." Let us make that our resolution, that by God's grace we will have the very best He has to give us during this year.

And *the best was a robe*. When he came first of all, he was not fit for the father's presence. It would have been impossible for the father to sit down to his table with that boy in ragged clothes. Having come from the swine-troughs of the far country, he must be cleansed and clothed before he could be at home in his father's presence. And therefore when he came, his father said, "The best robe! bring it! put it on him!" Poor fellow! I suppose he did not even know how to put his coat on. He probably had none; no doubt he had had to sell it. The best robe! What is salvation? It is to be justified in the sight of God. It is to enjoy the consciousness of God's favour, to be so apparelled that we can sit down in His presence with delight.

Many people have an idea that salvation is just the forgiveness of sins. It is that in part, but only in part. I should not like to walk the streets of gold as an ex-convict, would you? Salvation is designed to blot out the past. "According to the multitude of thy tender mercies"—not only forgive my transgressions, not only save me from the penalty of my sin; but blot out the past, so that when I come before Thee, I may have no remembrance of sin at all—"according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Thus our gracious God provides a righteousness which is not our own, but the righteousness of another.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

I wonder if any of you here remember the famous Dreyfus case in France? We can understand it now in the light of the war. Alfred Dreyfus, a captain in the French army, was charged with having sold military secrets to a foreign power; he was found guilty, and sentenced to a term of banishment on Devil's Island. He was brought before his regiment; and all the marks of rank were torn from him; his sword was unbuckled and broken in his presence, and the broken sword cast down. Thus he was disgraced before his fellows; and carried away a prisoner. But Zola, the novelist, took up his

cause; and it seemed likely to produce a revolution in France. After two or three years Dreyfus was brought back and re-tried; and so important was the case that a verbatim report of the cross-examination of the witnesses appeared in all the papers on this Continent. Everyone could read the evidence; and any unbiased mind could see that Dreyfus was the victim of a conspiracy, that he was an absolutely innocent man; but for the honour of the French army, he was found guilty the second time. But the next day the President pardoned him! But Dreyfus said, "I don't want your pardon. It is not pardon I ask for: it is vindication; it is justification. I would just as soon be on Devil's Island as walking the streets of Paris, where I am regarded as a traitor to my country, where there is a stain upon my name." And he declared that he would never rest until he had complete justification. And after the passage of other years, the whole story was unfolded and the sentence of the court was reversed. Dreyfus was given his commission again as a loyal citizen of France, as a captain in the French army. His regiment was again assembled; and in the presence of all his comrades, the marks of rank were restored; he was reinstated, and he was acclaimed a loyal Frenchman. He was justified!

There would be no heaven for us if we were not justified, if all our past were not blotted out, if we were not arrayed in the robe of Christ's perfect righteousness, standing before God as justified men. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." That is what the Lord says. And He will blot out all our transgressions, and receive us to Himself.

Some of you when you go home to-night will take your coat off, and put on another. I know I shall, because it is more comfortable. But there are many people who save their Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes for special occasions—Sunday-go-to-meeting or it may be Monday-go-to-parties—but anyway there are some things too good to wear to work. I have learned in my few years of experience, that it is not wise to call on the good housewife in the forenoon. She is the same woman who goes to church. She does not mind seeing the butcher, or the baker, or the grocer; but she does not want to be seen in her gingham dress—or whatever the stuff is of which it is made; I do not know what you call it—when the Pastor comes to the door. What if somebody were to invent some sort of a robe you could wear all the time without spoiling it, without its wearing out, that you could wear in the presence of the king in his drawing-room; and that you could wear in the factory, in the kitchen, in the shop—anywhere—and it would never get soiled, never wear out? That is what the religion of Christ is. It is good to wear to church; it is good to wear in the kitchen, in the blacksmith's shop, on the street, in the office, in the school, in the study,—wherever we are, that "best robe" will make us to appear as children of the King; and we shall never need a second one.

"And put shoes on his feet." *Do you need a new pair of shoes?* Some people hardly need shoes,—they ride all the time. Some people imagine that what this world needs is paved streets, better roads; and so our Social Service friends are going to build new houses, and clean up this world in such a fashion that there will not be any stones to knock your toe against, no hills to climb. But that is not the gospel programme at all! God does not promise that we shall have paved roads all the time; but He does promise us good shoes: "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet"—"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." No, my friends, He will not remove the temptation from you, but He will give you strength to bear it; He will not take the burden from your back, but He will put His Spirit within you, so that you can stand under it; He will not remove your enemies, but He will give you power to overcome them; He will not put out the fire of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, but will allow you to experience the furnace heated seven times more than its wont, that you may have One with you like unto the Son of God, and come out with no smell

of fire upon you. That is the principle of the gospel: "Put shoes on his feet, equip him for the road, prepare him for the conflict, energize him for the battle, strengthen him with might by My Spirit in the inner man." God does not promise to make circumstances easy; but He does promise to make us superior to circumstances. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

"And put a ring on his hand." I would like to talk to you about that for a week. Would you come every night? I don't suppose you would. "Put a ring on his hand!"—not merely a robe, and shoes, but some luxuries thrown in. I believe the Lord wants us to live luxuriously, to live luxuriant lives. He wants us to have abundant life; He wants us to enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ. "Put a ring on his hand," that everyone may know that he is restored to full favour in his Father's house.

I was telling someone a story of Mrs. Spurgeon last night. Mrs. Spurgeon was for many years an invalid; and she got the idea that she wanted a canary straight from the Lord. I suppose she could have bought one; but she began to pray that the Lord would send her a songster to brighten her lonely hours. One day when Mr. Spurgeon came home he found her rejoicing in a new gift. She did not know who had sent it. She had told no one but her husband,—and, of course, he had told no one else. But someone had sent her a beautiful canary. And when he came in he heard the bird singing, filling the room with melody. She said, "You see, I asked the Lord for my bird, and do you hear it?" Mr. Spurgeon replied, "Well, my dear, I am afraid you are one of the Lord's spoiled children. You get whatever you ask for." The Lord does give us luxuries; He does give us special love tokens. "Put a ring on his hand."

"Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry"—not only the outward man, not only our standing before God, with shoes for the road, and a ring on our hand; but food for the soul beside, a feast of good things! "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." But I cannot describe the feast! You must taste and see that the Lord is good.

"And they began to be merry." I come back to where I was a few weeks ago. "And he"—at the end of his own will, at the end of his own wisdom, at the end of all his resources—"he began to be in want"; and he kept on being in want until he came back to his father! But when he substituted his father's will for his own, and his father's wisdom for his own, and his father's plan for his own, and his father's storehouses for his own—when he came back to his father's house, abandoning himself entirely to him, "they"—listen!—"they began to be merry"; and they have never ceased since! They have been merry ever since. So that when the elder brother of whom I will speak next Sunday night, heard music and dancing—I am going to speak on dancing, the right kind of dancing, some night. How I wish we could have a lot of that kind of dancing in which David indulged! He was so full of spiritual joy that he danced before the ark. That is the right kind of dancing to engage in. "And they began to be merry."

"O happy day, that fixed my choice  
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!  
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad."

This is the fourth of January, nineteen-twenty-five. Will you begin to be merry? Is there someone here who will say, "I have thought, sir, that the religion of Christ was a long-faced, melancholy sort of thing." You never made such a mistake in your life! The only way to be happy in the true sense is to be rightly related to God. To be "merry" is to be rightly related to Him. Oh, let us come home to-night.

"Pass me not, O gentle Saviour,  
Hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art calling,  
Do not pass me by."

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

### BAPTISTS AND CHURCH UNION.

It is impossible that any denomination should be wholly unaffected by the present Church Union Movement; but perhaps no denomination outside of the three parties to the Union will be so much influenced by the merger as our own. We speak only for ourselves on this great matter; but we cannot refrain from calling the attention of our fellow-Baptists to the unprecedented opportunity for the giving of an uncompromising testimony to the spiritual character of the gospel of Christ, and of the church of Christ, which the present situation affords.

We attended one of the first meetings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, which was held in London, Ontario, at which this question of union was discussed. The debate lasted through several sessions of the Assembly; and the speeches on each side of the question, were exceedingly able. The Unionists, however, pleaded for union almost wholly on the ground of economy. There were some who quoted the seventeenth of John in support of their position; but the speakers, in the main, urged the necessity of eliminating competition, and economizing in men and money. We remember that practically every Unionist speaker pleaded the needs of the great West in pleading for union.

We listened on another occasion with equal care, to a debate on Church Union in a Methodist Conference. This was several years later, and honesty compels us to confess that the debate proceeded on an entirely different level from that which it had occupied in the Presbyterian General Assembly. In the Methodist Conference there was a greater degree of unanimity, and an almost entire absence of any scriptural appeal. Delegates were pleaded with to accept the report of a committee; and there seemed to be no recognition of the possibility of any one's having any religious conviction in the matter at all. Again the great argument was for economy.

While discussing the name of the church, and answering the objection that there would still be other churches than that of which the three would be composed, one speaker remarked that the other churches might come in as soon as they obtained grace enough to do so. After these years of discussion, we are seeing the outworking of the principle. While it obliterates the Methodist Church as a separate organization, it still leaves the Presbyterian Church. Even on grounds of economy it strikes us that the Union will be of doubtful advantage. Not a few Presbyterian churches have been divided; and a spirit has been generated in some quarters which it will take years to live down. Baptists will view the whole discussion with an attitude of detachment.

Viewing the matter from the standpoint of the New Testament, it is difficult to understand how anyone with an open Bible could favour this Church Union. Doubtless there are thousands of Methodists, including many ministers, who still believe the Bible to be the Word of God; and believing that, still hold to the great fundamental principles of Evangelical Christianity. But official Methodism seems to have utterly forsaken the evangelical position. At the time of their first appearance, we gave a series of lectures on the Methodist pamphlets entitled, "The Christian Hope", which were avowedly published to oppose the doctrine of the personal return of the Lord. We said at the time what we now write here: That it is doubtful whether in the long history of the Christian church, such infidel literature was ever published in the name of a Christian organization as these pamphlets. They bore on their face a fac-simile of the signature of the Secretary of the department by whose direc-



tion the pamphlets were published. The whole Methodist Church must be held officially responsible for the publication of that infidel literature. No doubt thousands of Methodists would not subscribe to these pamphlets; but the fact remains that no protest was made against them, so that it can only be assumed that the majority of Methodists approved. That being so, we are not surprised that the Methodist Church should go into the Union—or into almost anything else—with apparent unanimity. There seems to be not enough spiritual vitality left to protest against anything.

Side by side with this Union Movement, we see all sorts of sporadic growths which attract to themselves all kinds of religious extremists, producing a condition which must be utterly bewildering to multitudes of people. At the Port Arthur General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, one Unionist advocate said something to the effect that he would like to see any government that would dare to oppose the will of a united church; and one of the foremost Methodist leaders spoke of the ability of a united church to promote "godly legislation". Obviously, in the thought of some Unionists, at least, the United Church is to exercise some sort of political influence.

On every ground, therefore, it would appear that we have come to a day when Baptist testimony will be more than ever needed. We question whether Baptists ever had such an opportunity as that which confronts them to-day. What answer will Baptists make to the demand of the present situation? Are we to tone down the principles which have been vindicated in a thousand battles for the truth? Are we to compromise with error? People are hungering for the Bread of Life: there is a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord. We are persuaded that if Baptists will stand on the old principles; and fearlessly proclaim the gospel of salvation through the blood, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and on the authority of a divinely-inspired Bible, we may easily become God's instruments to lighten the present darkness, and to restore the religious world to some sort of moral sanity.

Wherever, whether in Ontario or in the West, the union of these denominations is consummated, the need of Baptist testimony will acquire a new urgency. We venture to suggest that Baptists everywhere should face the present crisis with a new consecration of all our powers to the service of Christ; and that we should proclaim with a new courage and with greater emphasis, the great principles for which our Baptist fathers contended; and for which some of them bled and died.

### EDUCATIONAL VACANCIES.

Within recent weeks three leaders in our Educational work have been suddenly called home: Dr. J. L. Gilmour and Dr. S. S. Bates, of McMaster University; and Dr. Franklin Sweet, the President of Brandon College. It is always a critical time in the history of a church when for any reason it loses its pastor; and when such a vacancy occurs on the staff of an educational institution, the consideration of the necessity of appointing someone to fill the vacancy is bound to make many people feel much concern.

So far as McMaster is concerned, there can be no doubt as to the theology of the men who will be selected. Our Convention stands so solemnly committed to the evangelical position and the principles of our great Baptist heritage, that even were a minority so disposed, it is unthinkable that the Board of Governors elected by the Convention as their representatives, would agree to the appointment of anyone who was not avowedly in hearty accord with our Baptist position. If ever there was any doubt as to where our Convention stands, the Educational Session at London must have entirely dispelled it.

The question therefore is, Where are strong men to be found for these positions? We have a conviction that the great Head of the church has within His gift the men who are qualified to exercise the duties of these vacant offices. We believe; therefore, that a duty devolves upon all the churches of the Convention, and upon all the members of those churches, earnestly to pray that the right men may be selected.

We do not feel the same measure of confidence in respect to Brandon College. We suppose it is true that Baptists generally, even in the West, are still evangelical; and we hope that from among them God will raise up leaders who will insist that Brandon College be kept true to the faith. The

finding of the Commission appointed to enquire into the teaching of Brandon College, though intended to vindicate the College, is the most terrible condemnation of its teaching that could be imagined. If the right man can be found for the Presidency of Brandon, such corrections as need to be made within the Institution could be made without a disturbance of the peace of the Denomination; but if the Baptist work in Western Canada, and particularly Brandon College, is to continue to deserve and receive the hearty support of Ontario and Quebec Baptists, we venture to suggest that reforms will have to be made.

We may well earnestly pray that both in Brandon College and McMaster University, men of God's choice, divinely equipped for their tasks, may be appointed to the vacant positions.

### "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD; I SHALL NOT WANT."

"I shall not want"—rest: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

"I shall not want"—peace: "He leadeth me beside the still waters."

"I shall not want"—mercy: "He restoreth my soul."

"I shall not want"—guidance: "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

"I shall not want"—courage: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

"I shall not want"—companionship: "For thou art with me."

"I shall not want"—comfort: "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

"I shall not want"—victory: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

"I shall not want"—gladness: "Thou anointest my head with oil."

"I shall not want"—satisfaction: "My cup runneth over."

"I shall not want"—anything in this life: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

"I shall not want"—anything in the life to come: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

## The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

Lesson LXIX.

January 25th, 1925

### RESTORATION OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM—Nehemiah, Ch. 4-7

#### I. How the Enemy Conspired to Stop the Re-building of Jerusalem.

1. He was wroth, and took great indignation (v. 1). The prosperity of the spiritual Jerusalem also is sure to fill the Devil with anger. Whoever helps to re-build the walls will incur the enemy's indignation. 2. He resorted to ridicule (vs. 2 and 3). This is a favourite weapon. From the beginning there is nothing men have desired more than to be called wise, and nothing of which they have been more afraid than to be esteemed foolish. Hence many a man has been laughed into the way of evil. In our own day there is no weapon in the Devil's armoury that is being used with more deadly effect than that of ridicule. Contempt is poured upon all those who contend for the faith; while those who turn away their ears unto fables are counted wise men. There is a useful lesson here, even for the junior classes. Perhaps there is nothing young Christians dread more than the ridicule of their companions. 3. The weapon is very effective with weak men. It requires more courage to endure ridicule than to stand up and be riddled with bullets; but to surrender before such a weapon is an infallible sign of moral weakness. 4. Finding their shafts of ridicule falling short, the enemy conspired to fight. We must not underestimate the strength of the foe because he begins by laughing at us; for when ridicule fails, he will resort to more violent measures. It is for ever true, that the strong man armed keepeth his palace; and that whoever works with God must fight the Devil himself. 5. The only success the enemy achieved—and that was but temporary—was to weaken the spirit of the men of Judah (v. 10). There will always be some who will turn back from the work (John 6: 60-71).

#### II. How the Builders Circumvented the Enemy.

1. They prayed (vs. 4 and 9). "All prayer" is one of the weapons of defense and offense with which the Christian is provided (Eph. 6: 18). 2. "The people

had a mind to work" (v. 6). There is much truth in the proverb, "Where there's a will, there's a way". The mind to work is more important than the method of work. Even a poor method will be effective with a determined mind behind it. 3. They set a watch against them day and night (chap. 4: 9). It is always God's way to accomplish His purpose by human co-operation. Hence we are admonished to watch as well as pray. 4. They were greatly encouraged by their leader (chap. 4: 13, 14). During the siege of Ladysmith a man was arrested and severely punished for discouraging the defenders. Those in the church who speak discouragingly of the Lord's work give great comfort to the enemy. We may well follow Nehemiah's example, and bid each other be encouraged by remembering what a great God we have. 5. The builders wrought both with the sword and trowel. Both these instruments must be employed in the work of the Lord. There is a work of destruction which is as necessary as the work of construction; and it is ever so that God's servants have to fight for the privilege of building. Either instrument without the other will be futile. 6. They organized with a view to co-operation. We are all tempted to extremes: on the one hand, to depend in the Lord's work upon organization; and on the other, insisting that the work can be accomplished only by spiritual power, we are tempted to fold our arms and do nothing but pray. We must pray! We must watch! We must prepare ourselves individually to fight! And then we must organize, that we may fight and build together. 7. The tireless industry of the builders effected their purpose at last (chap. 4: 23). It is important that we should be "always abounding in the work of the Lord",—not occasionally.

### III. Some of the Builders' Difficulties, and How They Were Overcome.

1. The selfish and unbrotherly conduct of the people toward each other threatened their destruction (chap. 5: 1-5). The Devil has no power over any of us from without: it is only when he gets within that he becomes deadly. 2. Nehemiah's faithful admonition is worthy of note (chap. 5: 6-11). A weaker man might have permitted the cancer to spread. Where sin is present, it is necessary that it be rebuked. 3. The people's response: when God's people are faithfully admonished, they will turn from their evil ways. Their turning is an evidence that they are His. 4. The example of Nehemiah was, as ever, more effective than his admonition. So of teachers and scholars and everybody: it is useless to exhort others to do what we do not do ourselves.

### IV. The Failure of the Enemy's Further Effort.

1. He repeatedly proposed a parley (chap. 6: 1-4). The Devil is a great talker, with whom it is always dangerous to hold converse. He is fond of proposing conferences. 2. Nehemiah's defense was his preoccupation (chap. 6: 3). Many an one would have been saved from disaster had he been able to say like Nehemiah, "I am doing a great work".—"Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Idleness is a prolific mother of evil. 3. The enemy resorts to lying and slander. He will, in fact, resort to anything to accomplish his purpose. It was by the testimony of false witnesses that the Lord Jesus was crucified; and it is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord. 4. The enemy hired a traitor to advise surrender; and in the perilous times in which we live our churches are sure of Shemaiahs to specialize in white flags (vs. 10-13). 5. Nehemiah courageously refuses to heed the traitor's counsel: "Should such a man as I flee?" We are greatly in need of such courage to-day. "In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" 6. Nehemiah classes the prophets of weakness with the enemy (chap. 6: 4). It is noteworthy that there was a prophetess as well as a prophet. Noadiah is not without her successors to-day. The cause of truth is greatly endangered, by those who counsel compromise and recommend weakness. Where principle is at stake, pacifism is treachery. 7. A firm policy put fear into the hearts of the enemy. It was the boldness of Peter and John which impressed the enemy in apostolic days. 8. The communication of "the nobles" with the enemy, and the intermarriage of their families, greatly endangered the work. What a sermon might be preached on the betrayal of the truth in modern times from vs. 17, 18, and 19! 9. Notwithstanding, the work was completed (chap. 6-15). 10. A record of those who shared in the work was

carefully preserved (chapter 7). Among them, honourable mention was made (chap. 7: 2) of the one whose report of the condition of Jerusalem (chap 1: 2) was responsible for the beginning of the work.

### THE GOSPEL WITNESS.

Beginning with the first issue of February and continuing to the last issue in April, we will send *The Gospel Witness* for three months as a trial subscription for 25c. One friend of *The Witness* sent in one hundred subscriptions. Another brother writes to say that he has found blessing in the pages of *The Witness*, that already there are several families in the church to which he belongs reading it; but that he is anxious that it should go into every family in the church. He therefore sends us the names of all the heads of families in the entire church, and an amount of money sufficient to cover the list at 25c each for three months. Another sends in twelve; another, ten; another, nine. Thus we have made a good beginning.

We should be very grateful to the pastors who read *The Witness* weekly, if they would assist us by calling their people's attention to the paper. We are hoping to receive at least a thousand trial subscriptions between now and the end of the month. Who will be the next to send us in a list of a hundred names?

We make another offer: To any one who will send us the names of twenty-five heads of families, preferably members of Baptist churches, we will send *The Gospel Witness* free of charge for one year. We are continually receiving testimonies of blessing received; and we earnestly solicit the co-operation of our readers in our effort to increase our circulation.

### THE PASTOR TO GO WEST.

In response to the earnest invitation of a number of brethren, the Pastor has consented to spend eight days in Vancouver, B.C., beginning with Sunday, February 15th, and concluding with Sunday, February 22nd, speaking Sundays and during the week between. During this period, he will hold a Bible Conference, giving a number of addresses on the fundamentals of the faith. During his absence the pulpit will be occupied by one of the outstanding preachers of the Continent. Announcement of this will be made later.

### LAST SUNDAY.

Though the weather was still very cold, the attendance at Bible School last Sunday morning was eight hundred and three. There was a great congregation in the evening. At the two services, about thirty came forward in response to the invitation.

### NOT LESS THAN FIFTEEN HUNDRED EASTER SUNDAY.

The work of the Bible School is proceeding so happily and such enthusiasm fills the hearts of the workers, that we feel confident we shall have an attendance of at least fifteen hundred by Easter Sunday. We urge all our members to work and pray for this. It is, of course, understood that we desire larger numbers only that we may therein find larger opportunity for the Lord's work.

### PAUL RADER IN JARVIS STREET.

We are happy to announce that during the Pastor's absence in Chicago, at the Baptist Bible Union Conference, Sunday, January 25th, the Jarvis Street Pulpit will be occupied by Rev. Paul Rader. Mr. Rader will teach Dr. Shields' Bible Class at 9.45, and will preach at eleven o'clock. In the evening, to accommodate the crowds which will desire to hear him, there will be two services, one in Massey Hall at 6.15, and one in Jarvis Street at eight o'clock. The preliminary part of the service in Massey Hall will occupy thirty minutes, and Mr. Rader will begin to preach at 6.45. At the service in Jarvis Street, Mr. Rader will begin to preach at 8.15. The Jarvis Street auditorium will be open at six o'clock, so that those who cannot get into Massey Hall may come direct to Jarvis Street Church—about ten minutes' walk.