

# The Gospel Witness

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

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## The Jarvis Street Pulpit

### THE PRODIGAL'S BROTHER.

A Sermon by the Pastor.

Preached in Jarvis St. Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, January 11th, 1925.  
(Stenographically reported).

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

"And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

"And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

"And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out and intreated him.

"And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

"But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

"And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—Luke 15: 25-32.



OR some weeks we have been meditating upon this chapter. We have followed the prodigal, in our thought, from his father's house into the far country and back again. Last Sunday evening we observed how heartily he was welcomed home. The verses I have read to you to-night strike a somewhat different note. The welcome was not entirely unanimous. There was someone at home who was not particularly pleased with the prodigal's return.

This part of the parable is generally passed over. It is not, I grant you, as inviting as the earlier portion; but it has its place in the design of the parable as a whole. I am aware that a parable in the hands of an extreme literalist is likely to be about as useful for purposes of illumination as a box of matches in the hands of a baby: there is likely to be rather too much light for safety. It is possible, by emphasizing the details of a parable, to rob the Word of God of its authority; and to make it, I fear, almost absurd. But here a prominent figure is put into this parable. Our Lord was a master Artist; there was never a superfluous line in one of His pictures. And when, in the background of this parable He sketched this surly, morose, ill-tempered, character, He was speaking not for His time alone, but for all time, for our day as well as His own. It has its application to-day just as it had to the people to whom the word was originally spoken.

Some of you remember that most useful institution—the family album. There were enshrined the portraits of our friends. As a minister I know that

it had its special uses; it was particularly useful to entertain the minister while the other members of the family were making themselves presentable. In that way I have been introduced to all the family; and on more than one occasion I have been told how different members of the family distinguished themselves, some of them by marrying particularly well, and some of them by not marrying at all. And this Bible is very much like that. It is a collection of portraits. I often turn its pages that I may hold communion with my friends. I can find within the pages of this Book every friend I have ever known—and the portraits of many who are not my friends, and whose closer acquaintance I have no desire to cultivate.

But the one characteristic about the portraits appearing in this Book is that they are all true to life. Some of you remember your experience when you went to the photographer. Like the good friends who run at election time, responding to the earnest solicitation of your friends, you went; and you sat for your portrait. In due time the proofs were sent to you; and you declared to your husband or wife as the case may have been, or to some other friends, that the proofs were photographic libels; they did not resemble you in the least, but made you look like "a fright." Then you went to the photographer full of indignation, and insisted that there must have been something the matter with the camera; it was out of focus, or something was wrong. He diplomatically assured you that you were quite right, that as a matter of fact, these were only proofs; and that, of course, when the picture is finished it will look very much better. He persuaded you to consent to his finishing two or three of the negatives, and promised to send you a finished picture. At last he did so. The artist had touched up the negative; and when you got those finished pictures you said, "Now that is something like"—and so it was, but it was not anything like you! But it was a great improvement on the proofs. You then ordered a couple of dozen to impose upon your absent friends who had not seen you for a few years.

Of course, the truth is, the proofs were absolutely true representations of yourself,—every wrinkle, everything that you did not want your friends to see, was there. But when the artist had finished the negative, all these defects were smoothed out. And if it was the portrait of a lady, you were made to look about ten or fifteen years younger than you are; and if a man, a great deal wiser than you may ever hope to be. Now you know that that is true to life, that that is how men get on in this world,—by flattering each other. And that is what is expected of the minister of the gospel. He is expected to be a "touch up" artist; and to represent human nature as being already "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing". But human nature is not in itself very beautiful. The grace of God can lay hold of us and make us ultimately like Christ; but by nature we are not particularly good to look upon.

Now this Bible tells the truth! I have said it is a collection of portraits; but it is a collection of portraits that are absolutely true to life.

And in my examination of these pages I came upon this character; and I said to myself, "I have seen you somewhere". There seemed to be in this portrait many lines of resemblance to some whom I had seen. I discovered that he was a member of Jarvis St. Baptist Church, and that he belonged to a very numerous family. In my travels about the land, I have yet to find a Christian church in which the family to which this elder son belonged, is not represented.

I call your attention this evening to three great principles which are here set forth: This story illustrates the possibility of there being *sonship without brotherhood*: here was a good son, but a very indifferent brother; and in the second place, the possibility of there being *service without fellowship*: he served his father; but he was out of fellowship with his father; and then in the third place, *heirship without happiness*: all that his father had was his; yet he was the most miserable man in all the countryside.

### I.

I begin my exposition, then, by saying that THERE MAY BE AN APPROPRIATION OF ALL THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF SONSHIP WITHOUT ANY RECOGNITION OF THE CORRESPONDING OBLIGATIONS OF BROTHERHOOD. This young man gloried in being his father's son: his father called him, "son". He did not dispute his right to a place in the family; nor was he the sort of son for whom his father ever had to apologize, or blush for shame. He was a young man who lived circumspectly, who was industrious, whom many supposed to be a worthy

representative of his father's house. Called by his father's name, he never dishonored it; but everywhere walked as one worthy of the name he bore. But if you examine the record you will find that while he advantaged himself of the privileges of sonship, there is nothing in the story to suggest that he ever recognized that that relationship to his father imposed upon him a certain obligation toward another,—who was equally his father's son! a good son, but a poor brother!

This is not a type of the heterodox religious professor. There are such; but this young man was a perfectly orthodox man. You who come here regularly know that I should be the last to underestimate the value of right thinking, or of correct opinion; but there is a type of orthodoxy that is as unattractive as any heterodoxy in the world: There is an orthodoxy that is self-centred, that considers its own interests, and is indifferent to the world about. I have seen many professing Christians who hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; who boast of having had a very clear and definite religious experience; they passed from death unto life; they were born into the family; they are absolutely sure of their place; they are not slow to claim the privileges which are theirs as sons of God. And yet month after month, year after year, pass; and they live in entire indifference to the need of the great world about them—but live for themselves alone. I want to find this young man to-night, if I can; or rather, I want the Word of God to find him, and to smite his heart and conscience and bring him in humble penitence to his Father's feet.

Here, then, was a man who saw no significance in the surplus of his father's house. It was the rule of that household that there was always to be found within its walls enough: no one did ever take the last piece of bread, who sat at his father's table; everybody was bountifully supplied; there was always enough—and to spare. And that is the rule, dear friends, of the provision of grace, that God provides enough; and what a comfort it is to have enough of anything! I think I could, without wasting your time, occupy you for an hour or so, expounding that one word "ENOUGH". Oh, in these days of scarcity, how thankful anyone ought to be who has enough! On this cold night, fuel enough, clothing enough, food enough, shelter enough, money enough, friends enough, health enough,—enough for my need! But where the Lord Jesus rules there is always enough. Grace—I was speaking about that immeasurable word this morning—grace enough!

"Plenteous grace with Thee is found,  
Grace to cover all my sin."

Forgiveness, which is an element in grace,—enough! Peace for this poor heart of mine, enough! joy enough, strength enough, health enough, righteousness enough, blood, to cleanse my sins away,—enough! Whatever your needs, enough!

There is no scarcity where the Lord Jesus is: there is enough. But is that all? Some people seem to think so; but that is not half the gospel. Enough—and—to—spare! But this young man, seeing the abundance on his father's table, when satisfied and satiated with the abundance of his father's house, did he turn a longing, lingering, glance upon the abundance of food still remaining, and pause to ask, "What is the meaning of it? Why did he provide enough and to spare? What is the surplus for? Who ought to be at this table enjoying the fulness of my father's house?" *What is it for?* What is the meaning of the wide arms of that Cross? To cover your sins? Is that all? Is that all? What is the meaning of this gospel of abounding grace, of abounding mercy, or divine power? Enough to take the worst sinner from the lowest depths of the horrible pit, and lift him to the height of the glory of God Himself! What is it for? Just for you? Just for you? Enough—and to spare; enough to satisfy the hungry heart of every unsaved man in Toronto, to cover the needs of the millions of India, and China, and Africa, and all the Islands of the Sea. And yet we fold our arms and say, "We have enough—enough—enough", with no understanding of the fact that the exceeding greatness of His power, which is toward those that believe, is toward all the impotent sons of men, if we but bring them the glad message of the gospel.

What are you doing for the unsaved? Here was a young man *who was not distressed by an empty seat at his father's table*. It was always there; for when at last the prodigal came home, he found his father unsurprised; everything was in readiness. And I have little doubt that day by day, month by month, and perhaps year by year, as they sat at the family board, there

was a vacant chair, lest he should come to-day. But the elder son was not at all distressed by his brother's absence. He was able to eat his meal alone. How many professing Christian people there are like that, who are never uncomfortable in view of empty seats! I confess I am: I hate them, except as they afford an opportunity for them to be filled. And our Lord Jesus Himself has no liking for empty seats, for in one of His matchless parables He described Himself as commissioning His servants to "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled". Oh, if we could measure the hospitality of our Father's house! If only we could know how He longs, how He yearns to have all the seats about His table filled! That is why He came from the glory.

I read a story of Moody, that when he went to Chicago as a boy, a poor working boy, he went to a church where they had rented pews. And he rented a whole pew—he needed only one sitting, but he rented a pew. And then he went out onto the street, and he filled that pew. As soon as he could afford it, he rented a second pew; and went out onto the street and gathered others. And it is said that in those days Moody's pastor was always sure of having two pews in his church full. Rain or shine, summer or winter—it made no difference—two pews were always filled from end to end; because there was somebody sitting in one of those pews that could not enjoy a meal unless he had someone to share it, and so he went out and gathered them in.

We are accustomed in our day to fold our arms and commiserate ourselves that we are fallen upon evil days: that the allurements of the world are irresistible; that the counter-attractions are being continually multiplied; and that it is folly to expect that the gospel will be able to hold its own with motor cars, and movies,—and I suppose now the radio, and I don't know what else besides. My friends, that idea is a delusion; that is not the cause of the empty seats in the house of God. The reason for empty seats in the house of God is the spirit of the elder brother inside the church! We may as well face it. Don't blame the movies; blame yourself because you don't move! That is the trouble. Be a spiritual "movie" yourself!

Two or three years ago I was waiting for a car at the corner of Avenue Road and St. Clair—up on "The Hill". Do any of you live up there? It is a fine place to live, particularly in the summer time. Well, I was waiting for a car one day. It was below zero, one of the coldest days I have known in Toronto. The lot on the south-west corner was then vacant. It was about five o'clock in the evening; and there was a little newsboy selling his papers. He had gathered a few little sticks, and then some heavier wood; and had built a bonfire, which was burning gloriously. And I saw a lot of well-dressed ladies—and gentlemen, too—people evidently in comfortable circumstances in life, all standing around the newsboy's fire, enjoying his hospitality. I suppose if the little fellow had given them his address and asked them to call, they would have been otherwise engaged; but when he built a fire on a cold day, everyone came to get warm at his fire. And when, in the church of Christ the fire of divine hospitality burns brightly upon the hearth, people will come from all parts of the city, and of the world, to get warm by the fire kindled from above. We ought to be distressed about empty seats when there are so many who need the surplus in our Father's house!

Another thing: *this man never talked to his father about his absent brother, never once.* If he had said, "Father, I wonder where brother is to-day? I wonder if he has anything to eat, if he has clothes to wear, if he is in need?"; if he had ever broken the silence, his father would have said: "Why, son, that is the thing I am thinking about all the time, it is with me day and night. My heart is longing for him. I think you might leave"—I am sure he would have said—"you might leave the things of the field and the farm, and get away down the road that leads to the far country, and see if you cannot find him." Are you doing that? If you are not, it is because you are not talking to your Father about your absent brother. Talk to Him; and you will receive a commission from Him immediately. He will send you forth to bring others to Christ. But, oh, the tragedy of it! Within not very many minutes' walk of this place where now I speak, there are great churches representing great congregations and great wealth, in the aggregate representing thousands of professing Christians, where they hold no prayer meetings. A church that does not pray! Think of it! Oh, the tragedy of it! No wonder souls are not saved. What are we doing? Shall we resolve that we will talk with Him day by day about the absent one, and be much in prayer for the salvation of the lost?

Then, here was a young man *who did absolutely nothing to bring his brother home*. But, thank God, he came home. But he came home in spite of his elder brother, not because of him! Not one word did he speak, not one act did he perform to bring that brother back again. Are you a church member? In every church you will find great companies of people who, from the first of January to the thirty-first of December, do nothing to bring souls to Christ. I am afraid we have some in this church.—Souls may be saved. We thank God we have had hundreds of conversions. God visits us almost every day.—but they have come in spite of some people even yet, and not because they have gone out after them. I want to press it upon your heart and conscience; and ask you, What are you doing to bring souls to Christ?

And what is more, this young man *was not there when it happened!* Have you noticed how some members contrive to miss all the miracles? They are never here when the thing occurs. Read the story of how the father saw him; and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, and brought him in, and all the servants heard about it, and the house was soon ablaze with light and resounding with music. There was music and dancing and overflowing joy,—but the record says, "Now his elder son was in the field"! He was absent when the miracle happened—the thing for which his father's house was standing, and all the provisions of his father's table were waiting, took place, but he had no part in it. He was not even there when it occurred! He was like a man I used to know. At the close of a service like this he would come up with his overcoat on his arm, or perhaps put it on, and say, "Pastor, you will excuse me, won't you? I would like to stay, but I have to get home to my wife". Sunday nights he was strangely anxious to get home to his wife—not other nights. And I am not sure that his wife was so anxious for him to come home either. It was a very convenient excuse. Miracles of grace happened in that church (it was not this church) but he would not know anything about them, until a week or so after; he always missed them; he was never there.

I went into a friend's house one night to have supper after a meeting. We were sitting at the table; and I heard a little voice calling, "Mother." And my hostess said, "You must go back to bed, Helen, it is time you were asleep." "But I can't sleep, Mother." "But you must go back to bed." Then there was silence for a minute or two, but soon we heard again, "Mother." At last the mother excused herself, saying, "I suppose I shall have to run up to her ladyship, and see what she wants." And she went up. Presently she came down smiling; and her husband said, "And what did Helen want?" "Oh," she said, "she wanted to know who is here; and what we are having for supper, and whether anyone is telling any stories, and whether there is going to be any music, and how long the guests are going to stay." And then she turned to me and said, "You know, Helen is always afraid she may miss something." She wanted to have her full share of joy in her father's house.

And I have seen some people like that in the church of Christ, always afraid that something might happen—Oh, no! not afraid—rather expecting, saying in their hearts, "Perhaps this is the night he will come home, and it would never do for me to be absent." For instance, some man comes home from business some night; and as he is about to get ready for prayer-meeting his wife says, "My dear, you have been very busy to-day; and you are tired. You must be careful of your health, you must not overtax yourself." And he says, "But I am afraid there won't be many there to-night; it is a rough, stormy night. I have a feeling that the meeting will be especially good, and I believe there will be blessing; and I feel the need of it. I cannot afford to be absent. I know it is bad weather, but I must go." And he goes. By and by he comes home again; and his wife sees a new light on his face, and knows that some wonderful thing has happened. She inquires, "What sort of a meeting did you have?" To which he replies, "Oh, it was a wonderful meeting; not very many there. But you have heard me telling about little Johnny in my class in Sunday School?" "Yes." "Well, you know I have invited him for months and months to come to prayer-meeting, and had almost given up hope. I am afraid I had ceased to expect him. But when I went into the prayer-meeting to-night, just inside the door was my little boy. And I sat down beside him; and had the unspeakable joy of seeing that boy come to Christ to-night. Now he is saved!" And I can imagine tears in his eyes as he says: "I should never have forgiven myself if that had happened while I was away." Oh, how many people have been lifted into heaven itself because of their unwillingness to miss anything of the joy of the Father's house!

I wish I could talk to you for a month or two on this subject. I ought to have taken a series, perhaps; but you can work out the principle for yourself, and it will be all the more valuable to you if you do your own thinking.

## II.

We have here illustrated, secondly, THE POSSIBILITY OF THERE BEING SERVICE WITHOUT FELLOWSHIP. This man was not an idler; he was a most industrious man, for he said, "These many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." He never did anything wrong: he was always busy doing that which was right; and it was service that needed to be done. But in the doing of it he had missed the one thing that was uppermost in his father's mind! I fancy I see him coming in from the field one day and telling his father the prospects for the year, saying, perhaps, something like this: "We have never had such a year; the increase of the flocks, and of the field is phenomenal. We have no room wherein to bestow our goods. We shall have to pull down our barns and build greater." And his father would say, "I am glad to hear it. You have my authority to make what alterations you like; build all the barns you need." And then he would lapse into silence. And I can see this elder son talking with himself and saying, "I do not understand it: I allow myself no recreation, I am working all the time, I give myself unsparingly to the promotion of my father's interests; but when I come and tell him of the results of my labours, he merely acquiesces in my proposals. He does not share my enthusiasms; but always has that far-away look in his eyes, as though he were not at home at all, as though he were thinking of something else than of the things which occupy my thought and energy." I fancy I hear him saying, "I don't understand my father." And he did not! He thought his father cared about the flocks and the wheat, and all the increase of the field; and entirely missed the great truth that his father lived for one thing only, and that was that his lost boy might come home again!

Oh, that is the picture of the modern church. Service without fellowship! The church of Christ was never busier than it is to-day. *There is a kind of preaching that is a service without fellowship.* The fault of such modern preaching is not that it is not true, although there is much that is not true—but the defect of much modern preaching is not in what it says, but in what it leaves unsaid. Many a modern sermon is like a non-stop express train—bound, presumably, for glory, but it never stops to let a poor sinner get on; or like some floating palace out there at anchor—beautifully furnished, lighted, fitted with mighty engines, but no gang plank for anyone to get on board. I remember a brother once sending me a sermon and asking my opinion on it. And I said, "It is all true, and all good so far as it goes; but it lacks one thing." And he said, "What is that?" I said, "There is no blood in it; it lacks the yearning note of the cross; it lacks recognition of the fact that men are lost, and need to be brought home." And no preaching is worth while, my friends, that lacks that.

*There is a kind of teaching which is service without fellowship.* I think of the great army of Sunday School teachers in this city, hundreds and thousands of them, teaching thousands upon thousands of boys and girls. Teaching them what? Doing what? Well, teaching—teaching—teaching—but teaching what? "Well, teaching the lesson." "What lesson?" "The scripture." You mean just the text of the lesson? Teaching the lesson! Oh, I have heard of teachers who spend their time on geography and chronology, and I don't know what else; and fail utterly to get to the central truth of all; that this Book is written to teach us that we are sinners and that Christ is a Saviour. And if you have not learned how to teach that, if you fail in that, you will have failed utterly. Your business as a teacher is to teach your scholars how to be saved.

Ah, yes, we are giving our money to missions. Are we? What for? What for? What for? Half our missionary societies, instead of sending flaming evangelists to bring men to Christ, are building schools yonder in India and China; and too often filling them with modernist teachers, spending their strength in education. It is all good in its place, providing it is the right sort of education. But what is the use of building a school for a lot of dead people? The first business of the church is to be God's instruments for the quickening of dead souls. That is what God is thinking about these days; that is what He is yearning over.

*There is much singing, too, that is service without fellowship.* Oh, what splendid choirs we have! Don't you folks be offended now; I can say anything I like to you. But I used to have a choir here, that was superb in its way. I think it had not its equal in Toronto, at least I never heard its equal, and I have been thrilled often by the music. But oh, for the note of the blood! Oh, for the appeal of the yearning heart to bring lost sinners home! That is why we sing these gospel hymns now; that is why we had to sweep the whole thing right out—not because we did not like fine music; but because we loved the souls of men more.

There may be some people here representing other churches; and I want to tell you that *the management of the affairs of the church sometimes is put into the hands of men who serve but who are out of fellowship.* "Oh," they say, "Mr. So-and-So is a fine business man; and his business ability ought to be at the disposal of the church." Does he come to prayer-meeting? "Oh, no! He does not come to prayer-meeting. He probably would go to a club or the theatre that night." Does he ever seek to win a lost sinner to Christ? "Oh, no, but he is a very excellent man, a man of stainless character, and a fine business man, and I really think we ought to put him on the finance committee and get him to work." I had a finance committee like that once. I did! It was a great finance committee too. We had to declare their offices vacant all in one night. Now I want to pass this principle on to some of you and tell you this: I declare to you that if a man were to come into this church with all the millions of Henry Ford—if he were not walking with the Lord, a spiritual man, abiding in Christ—so far as I am concerned he should have no office in this church. There ought to be no place, in fact, there is no place in any Christian church for a man who is not walking with God. I would rather have the financial affairs of this church in the hands of crossing-sweepers and scavengers, who were spiritual men, than I would have them in the hands of multimillionaires who are out of fellowship with God, and who do not share with Him His eager, wistful, longing, look toward the far country.

*And you ushers, what is your business?* To show people into a seat? Oh, no! To usher souls into the gates of pearl! That is your business. No matter what your office is that is the one business for which a church exists—to be in fellowship with God, and bring lost souls to Christ.

Now they have substituted what they call "Social Service" for evangelism, the uplifting of the masses for the salvation of the individual. But that is not God's way! My quarrel with the programme of the average modern church is this, that *it is spending all its energies in an attempt—now mark what I say—in an attempt to get the prodigal a better job in the far country.* They are going to pave the streets of the far country; they are going to build better houses in the far country; they are going to build schools and universities—especially universities—in the far country. Most of them belong there nowadays. They are going to institute all kinds of reforms in the far country—but leave the prodigal there! But that is not our business.

Someone will say, "Don't you believe in Social Service?" Yes! That poor, ragged prodigal needed a new coat—and he got it: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." But he had to come home to get it! And he needed a pair of new shoes—and he got them. "Put shoes on his feet." But he had to come home to get them! And he needed a few luxuries beside—and he got them: "Put a ring on his hand." But he had to come home to get it! And he needed a good square meal, a feast, a banquet—and he was given it. But he had to come home to get it! The primary thing is to bring the individual soul to Christ, then other things will be all settled,—the best robe, and the shoes, and the ring, and the feast, and all the merriment will follow. And when the church reverses that programme it reverses God's programme, and the blessing of the Lord is bound to depart.

### III.

And now, especially for the young people who are here, let me say this is the story of one who was an heir—but he was not happy: **HERSHIP WITHOUT HAPPINESS.** He was one of the most miserable men in the world. And that is what they say about the young people nowadays, that it is a great problem how to entertain the young people. I was in New York some months ago; and I was interviewed by a reporter from one of the papers, I think it was the New York World. The reporter was a young lady. And she said, "I understand, Mr. Shields, you do not go to the theatre?" I said, "No, I am too busy for one thing, and my inclination does not lead me in that direction." "Well," she said,

"your life must be very dull." Continuing, she said, "You don't play cards, I presume?" "No," I said, "I have other things to occupy my time and my hands." "Oh," she said, "I wonder what you do for a little diversion sometimes?" And then with an apologetic smile, she said, "Of course, you don't dance?" "Well," I said, "not your kind of dancing." Then she said, "How in the world do you live?" What a compliment to the people of this age, that life is to consist in such frivolity! I saw, or heard, last week of our good friend Rader's definition of a flapper. You heard it, perhaps. I have hardly seen any in this city, but I saw one this morning just flapping along. Brother Rader said a flapper was like a bungalow with a painted front, a shingled back, and no attic. Well, people who find their pleasures in these attractions, I am afraid, strongly resemble that bungalow.

There was a great religious assembly in this city a few years ago, when presidents of universities, professors, doctors of divinity, and pastors of churches, and missionaries, were here from all over the world; and they spent one whole day discussing the question, What should be the attitude of the church toward amusements? I said at the time, and I repeat it now, one might suppose the great question facing the blood-bought church of Christ is, What sort of a rattle shall we buy for the baby? As though we were saved for that purpose,—to compete with the denizens of Hollywood!

Now, my friends, it is for us to learn the secret of joy in our Father's house. But here is a picture: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." Someone may say, "I never had a good time: I am religious, I am very religious; I am working all the time, but I am very unhappy. I have never had a good time." And that is the case; and because of that, lacking the one thing for which a church exists, you find the elder brother in the theatre and elsewhere, finding his pleasures in some other quarter than where he ought to find them.

"And as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing." I can see him as he comes and hears something he had not heard before: a new kind of music and dancing. "Ah," but you say, "I thought you did not approve of dancing?" Oh, yes, there is no harm in this kind of dancing, the kind of dancing that David did, before the ark. I remember being with an old friend of mine who was past sixty years of age. We had just come from a great meeting. We got home past midnight; and I can see him now walking up and down in his study, as he said, "Brother, I don't want to go to heaven yet if the Lord will let me stay here for a little while, for this is heaven to me." And he danced that night! He was well past sixty, but he danced as lightly as a young roe, back and forth, full of joy—because sinners had been saved.

Everyone was lighthearted, except the elder son, in the father's house that day. Here is a text for some of you preachers: "And he called one of the servants, and asked him what these things meant." A son had to humble himself to ask a servant to introduce him to the secret of joy in his father's house! He did not like that kind of music: he liked classical music; you could not please him. "Classical music"! Some day I must try and work out a definition for that term "classical." Classical music generally means something only the singers understand—and no one enjoys. He was a man who did not want the neighbours to know he had a naughty brother; he was so respectable. I have tried to find an explanation of some things I have seen in the lives of certain types of people who say they are Christians. Here is a man who is saved, but who has no passion for the salvation of others, who has no desire for the lost, to bring them to Christ; but is just as cold and dead as a stone. How can we explain that man? This scripture explains him: "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." But the son could not; he "had forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." There are some church members who seem to say, "Please don't tell anyone I needed to be converted; I have become very respectable. I don't want anyone to know that



I ever was in a far country." Yes; some professed Christians seem to have forgotten the happy day when Jesus washed their sins away. Then "came his father out, and intreated him" and said, "Come into fellowship with me." Let us get back to the cross, and to the yearning heart of God, and to communion with Him. His father came out and "intreated him". It is God's call to-day. He intreats us to understand the Cross, to recognize that His supreme purpose in this day and dispensation is to seek and to save that which was lost. Shall we not yield to the divine intreaty?

"And he was angry, and would not go in." That is the Baptist deacon who does not believe in evangelistic meetings. Thank God, we have no such deacons here. Many a broken-hearted pastor has said to me, "My deacons don't care about the salvation of souls. If I propose to make a special effort to bring souls to Christ, they will not stand with me; and if I call the help of an evangelist, they will not attend the meetings."

"He was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out and intreated him." What was the trouble? Do you believe you can be happy as a Christian? Do you not believe there is enough in Christ to satisfy you? And his father said, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. You might have had a feast at any time; and if you have never had a time of merry-making with your friends, it is because you have provided yourself with no occasion for merrymaking. You never have been so full of joy that you wanted to share it with another; you have made no occasion of joy; you have missed that altogether. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." "This thy brother"—"No, no! Not my brother! Thy son,—not my brother—thy son, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed the fatted calf for him". "No," said the father, "this is thy brother!" "Not my brother! thy son!" And it was as though his father had said, "You will never get inside the circle until you call him your brother. This thy brother—thy brother, thy BROTHER—was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

A man was going down the street in a certain city one chill November day. The wind was blowing and the rain was falling. As he hurried along under the cover of his umbrella, he espied in a doorway a little waif of the street, trying to find shelter from the wind and rain. Moved with compassion, like his Master, he stopped; and there the little fellow stood, pulling his thin coat about him, his elbows through his sleeves. And as he looked at his feet, he saw his little toes peeping through his worn shoes; beneath his ragged coat there was no shirt,—he was a picture of human want and wretchedness! And the kind-hearted man said, "Laddie, you look very hungry." "I am, sir." "And you are cold?" "Very cold, sir." And he said to him, "Come with me and I will get you something to eat." Then he took the little fellow by the hand, and they went to the best restaurant he could find, and ordered the best dinner the house could provide. The appetizing dishes were soon spread before them. The little fellow looked shy and made no motion to eat. The man said, "Laddie, that is all for you; I want you to have a good dinner." But still he hesitated. And the man said, "It is for you, eat it, or it will get cold." And he continued to press him: "I thought you said you were hungry. Don't you like what is there?" "Oh, yes, sir!" He had never seen such a dinner in his life except through a window when seeing other people comfortably seated at their tables. The good man said, "If that is what you like, and you are hungry, why don't you eat?" Still the boy refused to begin. And his friend said, "Come now, there is something the matter here, and I want you to tell me what it is." He was a manly little fellow; but in spite of his attempt at self-control, tears escaped and ran down his cheeks. His benefactor said, "Tell me now just what is the matter." "Well, sir, Billy, that's my chum, he's outside, and he ain't got no dinner; I couldn't eat this without him; he wouldn't eat it without me." "Well," said the man, "would you like to bring Billy in?" "May I?" "Yes." "Like a shot he was gone. After being absent a short time, he came back again, leading another boy by the hand—just as hungry, just as cold, just as much in need. And he was placed on the other side of the table, and a second dinner was brought; and soon they were oblivious to all their surroundings, and lost in the enjoyment of the feast.

Shall I tell you why some people don't enjoy their Christian life? It is because in the very nature of the case you cannot enjoy the religion of Christ alone. It must be shared. And if you ask me to give you the philosophy of

the gospel in a sentence, it is this: That my Lord Jesus Himself, if I may reverently say so, could not enjoy the glory and leave "Billy" outside.

"For though here below, 'mid sorrow and woe,  
My place is in heaven with Jesus, I know.  
And this I shall find, for such is His mind,  
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind."

He could not enjoy the glory if I were not there. He really could not! That is why He died. Praise the Lord! I am going to be there someday.

Is there an unconverted one here to-night? You have been sitting back there and saying, "Well, sir, I think you have described the church; I think it is full of elder brothers; and that is why I am not a Christian." Well, my friends, I plead guilty in behalf of all my brothers and sisters in the church. We have not been as earnest, as faithful, as loving as we ought to have been. But if you do not come for others' sakes, will you not come for the Father's sake? He wants you, and if the churches have failed, the Lord Jesus has not failed: He is the same, yesterday, to-day and forever." I beseech you to come to Christ to-night! Then join with us, and help us to prove to the world that the very joy of heaven consists in seeing sinners saved.

## EDITORIAL

### "HALLELUJAH!"

The length of this week's sermon greatly reduces the space left for other matter. We must therefore beg the indulgence of our many readers who live beyond the bounds of our Jarvis Street membership, while we tell once again the story of the good hand of our God upon us. We believe it is glorifying to God to publish the news of the triumphs of the gospel everywhere; and we see no reason why we should refrain from publishing it when we have the joy of witnessing it in our own church.

Last week we held three great fellowship meetings; and it is in order to give a background to our record of blessing there experienced that we give the figures of our increase for the last three years. We give the figures in order to show something of the difficulties and responsibilities of a rapidly growing church. At our Annual Meeting of April, 1921, covering the period April 1st, 1920, to March 31st, 1921, we reported a membership of 1,103. It was at that meeting the first battle was fought in the six months' war to terminate the present pastorate. The issue was decided on September 21st, 1921. The following table will show the increase in membership to date:

	By Letter	By Experience	By Baptism	Total
1921-22 .....	68	61	90	219
1922-23 .....	40	26	116	182
1923-24 .....	72	59	253	384
1924-25 (to January) .....	57	46	266	369
	<u>237</u>	<u>192</u>	<u>725</u>	<u>1154</u>

From the above it will be seen that our total increase for the three years and ten months has been 1,154,—which, added to the 1,103 as of April, 1921, makes a total of 2,257. In the period under review we have lost: By erasure, 39; by death, 43; by letter, 554—a total of 636. This number deducted from the total of 2,257, leaves our present membership 1,621. It should be noted that of the 554 lost by letter, 341 were dismissed to form another church, leaving a total ordinary loss for the four years of 295, as compared with a loss of 293 for the preceding four years (1918-1921).

The present membership of Jarvis Street Church is the largest Baptist membership in the Dominion. Such a rapid increase in membership carries with it great difficulties. It becomes a great problem to know how to shepherd the sheep and the lambs of the flock. With his many public duties, it is impossible for the Pastor to visit except in special and urgent cases, and that, when he is sent for. Our three great weekly prayer meetings, which have continued now since January, 1921, have done much to meet the church's need.

But it occurred to us that we might take one week for special fellowship meetings. Two of the meetings last week were held in the auditorium, Tuesday and Thursday. At each meeting a census was taken of those present. Something over nine hundred and fifty cards were signed; the actual attendance at the three meetings must have exceeded a thousand, because many were present who did not sign cards.

The cards show that more than fifty per cent. of the resident membership of the church were in actual attendance at one or more of the prayer meetings last week. While time was given to prayer, the meetings were chiefly given over to testimony; the object being to give opportunity for the members to tell each other of their spiritual state. At the three meetings there could not have been less than five hundred testimonies given; we are inclined to believe there were many more.

The Saturday night meeting was the smallest of the three, the actual attendance being exactly two hundred. But it was a wonderful meeting! It was one of the finest examples of the unity of the Spirit we have ever seen. We heard from members of the church who had come from nearly every denomination: but who, by the study of the Word of God, had been led to see their duty to be buried with Christ by baptism; so that we had an example of genuine "church union" on the only basis upon which a spiritual union can be realized—which is obedience to the Word of God.

The members of the church who did not attend either of the services, and who did not write, will be visited, with a view to a careful revision of the church roll. It is confidently expected that the Communion Service on the evening of February 1st will be the largest ever known in Jarvis Street.

We pass on to our readers the suggestion of a week of fellowship meetings, to give the membership of the church an opportunity to give an account of itself. We are inclined to believe that this should be repeated at least three or four times a year; and that the members who are not heard from should then be visited. In this way it may be possible to conserve much of that which otherwise would be lost. One thing is certain: the meetings of last week went far to show that the work in Jarvis Street is of the Lord.

## The Whole Bible Sunday School Lesson Course

Lesson LXX.

February 1st, 1925.

### RESTORATION OF THE LAW.—Nehemiah, chapters 8-13.

#### I. Reading the Word of the Lord.

1. Even the law of Moses was so attractive that the people gathered together as one man to hear it read. Wherever there is a true revival there will be kindled an interest in the Word of God. 2. If the law of Moses was attractive, how much more the full revelation of the grace of God in Christ. There is no book in the world so interesting as the Bible. 3. The Law was for everybody that could hear with understanding, not for scribes and priests alone (chap. 8: 2). So the Bible should be in the hands of all the people. 4. The people listened from the morning until mid-day, while the Word of God was read. What would people of our day say if it were even proposed that they should listen to the reading of Scripture for half a day! But when there is a passion for a knowledge of the will of God, there will be attention to the Word of God (chap. 8: 3). 5. There was great reverence for the Law: when Ezra opened the book "all the people stood up". It is important to teach children reverence (chap. 8: 5). 6. The people gave audible and visible approval, saying "Amen!" and lifting up their hands (chap. 8: 6). Some people would be less disturbed by congregational responses to the preached word if they knew their Bibles better; nor would they object to people being asked to lift up their hands or stand upon their feet, signifying their surrender to Christ. 7. Ezra read in the Law of God distinctly and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (chap. 8: 8). There is need for the exposition of Scripture: we should give the sense and cause the people to understand; but there is a place for the practice of reading the Word of God distinctly. 8. The people were told not to be sad but joyous on hearing the Word. The Lord Himself said He had spoken certain commandments that our joy might be full. 9. There was a special reading of the Law on the

second day for the leaders of the people (chap. 8: 13). Every true disciple of Christ should study the Word of God; but a very special obligation rests upon those who are called to be teachers, to know what God has said. 10. They did what was found written in the Law: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (chap. 8: 13-17). 11. The people continued their study daily with gladness (chap. 8: 17, 18). To those who study the Bible but a little, it may seem dry; but to those who study it much, it becomes a well of joy.

### II. Further Study of the Word (Chapter 9: 1-3).

1. They studied the Word a fourth of a day, and a fourth of a day they confessed. It would take us longer to confess our sins if only we spent longer before God, allowing Him, through His Word, to reveal them. 2. Their study of the Word led them to stand up and praise the Lord. God's praise should be the continual occupation of His people. There is a place for petition in our prayers; but there should be a very large place for praise. 3. They found occasion for praise in studying the record of God's works (chap. 9: 5-38). Thus believing study of the Word always leads to thanksgiving and praise. 4. They made a covenant with the Lord that they would do according to His commandments (chap. 9: 38). There follows in the tenth chapter a list of those who sealed the covenant. 5. In the eleventh chapter we are told the people were settled in the land by lot. God has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation.

### III. Still More Study of the Word (Chapter 13).

1. They found something in the Law this time they had not seen before. So will it always be with those who study the Word. 2. That something required a greater degree of separation. Those who boast of perfection have read the Word but little. If they read it more, they would see there were still some Ammonites and Moabites about them which ought to be put away. 3. They found the house of the Lord polluted, and in need of cleansing (chap. 13: 4-9). Though the house had been so recently built, it was soon polluted. If we would be clean we must be continually cleansed. 4. Nehemiah discovered that the Levites had been neglected, and their portion had not been given them. We are to render to every man his due. Some churches might be expected to have a revival if they would pay their pastors' salaries. 5. It was discovered that the Sabbath was being broken; and Nehemiah admonished them in respect to this matter. 6. He discovered also that the curse of mixed marriages had once again come upon them; and it had the effect of corrupting even the language of the people.

### LAST SUNDAY'S SERVICES.

The attendance at Bible School last Sunday morning was nine hundred and twenty-seven, including three hundred and seventeen in the Pastor's class. At the morning service, there was a great congregation which almost filled the entire church. Several responded to the invitation. In the evening the church was packed to the utmost capacity, with many standing. Thirteen responded to the invitation, among them, one complete family—father and mother and daughter. Fifteen were baptized on Sunday and five on Tuesday evening. A large number will be baptized Sunday evening, February 1st.

The Pastor's sermon on "Church Union", preached last Sunday evening, will appear in the next issue of *The Witness*.

### PAUL RADER IN JARVIS STREET.

During the Pastor's absence in Chicago, his place will be taken by Mr. Paul Rader, of Chicago. He will teach the Pastor's class Sunday morning and preach at eleven o'clock; and at Massey Hall at 6.15 and Jarvis Street at eight o'clock in the evening. Massey Hall doors will be open at 5.30 and service will begin at 6.15. Jarvis Street doors will be open at 6.15; prayer and praise service will begin at seven o'clock; Mr. Rader is expected to arrive at Jarvis Street at about eight o'clock. Sunday morning the auditorium doors will be closed from ten o'clock to 10.40 for the teaching of the lesson. The School will meet at 9.30 instead of 9.45, and classes will adjourn at 10.30, so that the School may take its place in the auditorium before the doors are opened to the general public.